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CONTENTS



The Show Must Go On

Turn downtime into prime time with flowers and foliage that peak when the days are growing shorter.

By Therese Cieslinski

48

Features

* = COVER STORIES

54 Purple Passion*

Coneflowers bloom madly, even in a drought. Birds and butterflies love them, too. Check out the classic and brand-new varieties for your natural landscape. By Sally Roth

58 Your Second Harvest*

Plant right now, and you will be eating homegrown food until Thanksgiving. Here's what to plant and the strategies you need to succeed, wherever you grow. By Ron Clancy

64 Garden with a View

At this resort, guests can pick fresh from the garden overlooking the ocean. By Willi Evans Galloway ▼



70 The Secret of Our Excess

Can gardeners be too generous with their bounty? This wise guy has had enough. By David Caruso



ON THE COVER The simple act of watering your garden is a chance to show you care about the environment. Look for hints throughout this issue. Photograph by Christa Neu

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CONTENTS



32



25



37

In Every Issue

* = COVER STORIES

4 IN SEASON

8 LETTERS

12 ASK OG*

Homemade pest spray, the watering formula, burlap caution.

14 NEWS*

Harvesting hints, seedless reproduction, drought-proof plants.

20 SOIL*

Want to cut down on weeds? Want more fertile garden soil? Plant these five combinations and let nature do the work for you.

24 LANDSCAPE

Turn dead spaces into growing places. Plus: A bulb that blooms in late summer.

28 FOOD*

Capture fresh tomato flavor to enjoy all year. And a tasty salad green that grows like a weed.

32 PEOPLE*

OG readers share their tips for harvesting rainwater and keeping dogs and chickens.

42 GREENHOUSE

Is our energy future in the pasture? The facts about ethanol. The right fuel for your grill, too.

76 CLOSER LOOK

One bite of a crunchy pickle will bring you back to the summer day you picked it.

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IN SEASON

So What Can You Do?

Despair and denial are not surprising reactions to the news reports about climate change and other threats to the environment. The vast majority of scientists are telling us that human activity is having an unprecedented impact on the atmosphere, which may lead to catastrophe on every continent. Many people insist that we are doomed unless we dramatically change the way we live right now. Others dispute the scientific consensus, citing the records of climate shifts from the past as evidence that the current data simply reflect normal fluctuations in our atmosphere.

I'm not trying to provoke a heated debate about this. Rather, I'd like to suggest a reaction that we will all agree on: personal responsibility. With the world's population growing so rapidly—it has more than doubled in the past 50 years—the demand on our natural resources is increasing and shows no signs of slowing. But we can all make an immediate and real difference by using our resources as conscientiously as possible.

The most precious resource may be the most abundant: water. Though the surface of our planet is 80 percent water, less than 1 percent of it is usable fresh water. This gardening season began with a drought that forced municipalities in some regions to limit water usage.

A serious, large-scale problem like this may seem well beyond our ability to affect it. But in fact, every day you have many chances to have an impact. Throughout this issue, you'll find information on smart water use. From just how much to water your garden to a gardener's rainwater collection system to our feature article on coneflowers, a drought-tolerant perennial, you'll get hints on reducing your water usage. We're also well into our campaign to spread the word about water conservation and bring rainwater harvesting systems to community

gardens in 20 cities throughout North America. (Visit OrganicGardening.com to learn more about this program and how you can join in.)

Yes, I realize there's only so much you can do about global problems. But at *Organic Gardening*, we've always believed that all of us making thoughtful choices every day is the best solution to the challenges we face.

Stay cool out there and I'll meet you here again next time.

Scott

P.S. We know a lot of you archive each issue of *Organic Gardening*. Reuse is the best way to cut down on waste. But if you do need to discard an issue, we have joined with other magazine publishers in asking you to recycle it.



3 Things I Learned from This Issue

Tasty and Wild

Mâche, the gourmet salad green, is a weed that needs almost no care from you. Plant it now—see how on page 28—to harvest this fall.

Plastic Reduction

Each year, Americans use 100 billion plastic bags. See page 44 for a better option when you're shopping. And check the tip on page 14 for an idea that puts the bags you already have to good use eliminating a serious pest.

Pollinator Attractor

Buckwheat is a fast-growing "green manure" that makes your garden soil more fertile and draws bees and other beneficial insects to your plot. Find out on page 21 how and when to seed it in your beds.



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LETTERS

Watering Can Can-Do

While I was reading the June/July issue, in the back of my mind was some watering I needed to do. I was contemplating getting the hose out when I saw the piece about watering cans [Closer Look]. So I got up off my duff and grabbed a bucket and the watering can. Schlepping water from the tap gave me the exercise I needed, and I used much less water this way.

Michael Janavel, *Staten Island, New York*

Ground Water

For gardeners looking for new ways to conserve water, I suggest drip irrigation and soaker hoses. I have used both for almost 20 years. They are easy and inexpensive to install. My water bill stays the same year-round, no matter the season. I have 10 separate garden areas, and I water all of them (approximately a quarter of an acre) in less than 20 minutes each day. I also use a variety of green, red, and black (organic) plastic-type mulches from Lee Valley with the water lines under the mulches. I only water the roots, not the leaves of the plants.

I'm not afraid of getting dirty, but gloves are a good idea.

My plants are growing great with absolutely no wasted water!

Catherine Martin
Athenquin, Illinois

Handle with Care

A caption in "More Gain, Less Strain" [May] reads, "The soil is organic, so

bare hands are used..." The implication is that organic soil is somehow safer to handle than soil that is not organic. I'm not afraid of getting dirty, but one needs to

remember that tetanus, *E. coli*, and a multitude of other microorganisms are 100 percent organic. They can be

present in any soil. Gardening gloves really are a good idea. If you choose not to wear them, be aware of the risks and the need for a good cleanup, especially before preparing food.

Vivien Bouffard
Norwood, Massachusetts

Glad to Know You

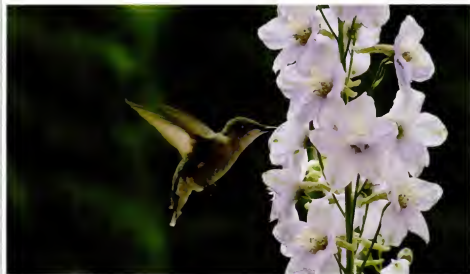
Thank you for the article on *Acidanthera* [Landscape, June/July 2007]. I immediately fell in love with a gladiolus I had never heard of before. I enjoyed *Organic Gardening* as young reader of my mother's subscription, and after many years as a subscriber, I continue to enjoy it.

Maggie Courtney
Plano, Texas

READER PHOTO CONTEST

Tracy Silvert caught this hummingbird feeding in her flower garden in New Smithville, Pennsylvania. "I waited patiently for this little gal to appear, and when she did, it was as if she was posing for the picture," Silvert says. "She went to each flower of my delphinium and didn't seem to mind that I was taking pictures of her."

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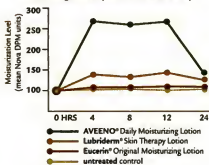
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LETTERS

Sweet Tomatoes

As we entertained friends one evening for a casual dinner, my wife was asked how much sugar she added to her superb spaghetti sauce. It was because of my wife's skilled use of our homegrown, flavorful tomatoes recommended by OG that we were able to say, "Zero!"

Denis Giffels
Brodheadville, Pennsylvania

No Slime on Pine

Gardeners plagued by slugs in straw mulch [Letters, June/July] should try using pine needles. We're blessed with a large pine and use the needles it sheds as a garden mulch and on pathways. We have no problems with slugs in these areas. Guess they don't like the prickles! Pine needles, though acidic, don't seem to affect our soil pH.

Catherine Hancock
Reno, Nevada

WE ASKED, YOU ANSWERED

How do you keep cool when gardening in the heat?

Summer sweaters is not enough to remove the cool from OG readers. Temp-lowering tips from the compostable to the practical.

I was brought up on a farm. My mother had a garden, and she taught me to put a green cabbage leaf in my hat to keep cool. It works. When the leaf starts to smell, it's time for a new one!

Mike Klem
Port Jefferson Station, New York

During the summer, I set up a 10-foot round swimming pool in my garage (out of the sun). I go take a dip every time I get too hot. I am able to work and play longer while staying refreshed.

Christina Ledford
Mountain Grove, Missouri

In the Caribbean, with the heat indexes ranging from 95° to 105°F, it is a matter of



life or death if we don't keep ourselves cool while gardening. First, we go out very early in the morning—before 7 A.M. Second, we dress with light, long-sleeved clothes (light blue reflects UV rays best). We take many breaks to catch our breath. And we keep a water hose handy for a cooling shower if needed.

Rosa Sanchez, Moca, Puerto Rico

Next: Low-budget gardening: Share your cost-conscious tips for creating a great landscape. Deadline: September 1

Questions to ponder for upcoming issues:

- You couldn't pay me to grow [insert plant name here] again. Why not?
- Slug control: What method works best in your garden?
- Oooh, that smell! What is the most appealing or repellent garden scent and why?

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ASK OG

Edited by Will Evans Galloway



Water Wisely

How many times per week should I water if I'm supposed to give my vegetables an inch of water per week?

Harold Bussing
Camarillo, California

In a nutshell: Watering needs vary depending on how established your plants are, soil type, and weather conditions. Observe your plants and use your soil's moisture content to help gauge when you need to water.

The whole story: Figuring out how much water you need to apply to your garden to equal 1 inch involves

complicated math equations, investing in a water flow meter, and calculating the gallons-per-minute flow rate of your water wand. Forget that! Stepping outside and observing your plants and soil is a far more intuitive and just as effective way to tailor your watering schedule to fit your garden's needs.

Watering the soil deeply, but infrequently, encourages your plants to develop robust root systems that can mine water from deeper in the soil. So wet the top 6 to 8 inches of soil each time you irrigate. That's about 13 minutes of watering on average. "Water, then wait about half an hour and see how deep the water went," instructs Don Schultz, the horticulture manager at the Water Conservation Garden at Cuyamaca College in El Cajon, California. "Determine the length of watering time based on how deep the water went." You can then assess irrigation frequency based on how fast your soil dries out. Wait to water again until the soil has dried at least 2 inches down from the surface.

Weather conditions, including wind, humidity, and temperature, can also affect how often plants need water. "Plant observation is important," Schultz says. If your plants look water-stressed, irrigate them right away instead of waiting for your next scheduled watering. As a general guideline, Schultz recommends watering established vegetable plants until the soil is soaked down to 6 to 8 inches twice per week. Newly planted vegetables may need to be watered more frequently until they develop larger root systems.

Tip: Schultz recommends using drip tape, as opposed to soaker hoses, to water your vegetable garden. Soaker hoses do not emit a uniform amount of water along the length of the hose. Drip tape encloses a flexible drip line with preinserted drippers that deliver a uniform and steady stream of water every 12 inches. Drip tape is available at garden centers and online at dripirrigation.com.



Best of Your Basil

How should I harvest basil leaves to get the most from each plant?

Georgi Reynolds
Franklinton, Louisiana

In a nutshell: Basil has opposite leaves, meaning they emerge from the stem exactly across from each other. Harvest by pinching a portion of the stem off right above a set of leaves (see photo above).

The whole story: A single basil plant can yield 24 cups of leaves if you prune the plant correctly. "When the apical tip [the tip of the main stem] is removed, basil starts branching," explains EagleSong, an expert organic herb grower and the owner of RavenCroft Garden in Monroe, Washington. "When the third set of leaves forms, pinch off the tip." This signals the plant to send out two new branches or leaders. EagleSong recommends pinching back the leaders when they develop three sets of leaves and doing the same with the next set of leaders so you end up with a plant that has 8 to 10 branches. Pinching keeps the plant bushy and forestalls flowering, allowing you to harvest more leaves.

Keep your basil producing by feeding it with a liquid organic fertilizer that contains fish emulsion and kelp. "Feed every other week in the beginning of the season and then once a month later in the season," EagleSong advises. Continue to pinch the plant's top set of leaves back

about once a week. If you need a lot of basil at once, you can cut the plant down by half. Just be sure to fertilize it afterward to kick-start new leaf production.

You can harvest basil anytime, but in the morning is best. "I never put basil in the fridge, because it often turns black," EagleSong says. Instead she keeps basil in a glass of water on her kitchen counter out of direct sunlight, where it stays fresh for several days.

Burlap vs. Weeds

I'd like to use burlap under mulch for weed control. Is it okay to use treated burlap?

Sherry Rondoni
Sacramento, California

In a nutshell: No. Treated burlap contains fungicides that could leach into your soil or watershed.

The whole story: Manufacturers often treat burlap and other fabric weed barriers with copper-based fungicides, including Compsol and SpinOut, to prevent the fabric from decomposing when it comes into contact with damp soil. SpinOut also prevents roots from growing up or through treated fabric. These fungicides may leach into your soil. Copper fungicides are toxic to aquatic wildlife, including amphibians and fish. Runoff from sites that are covered by this burlap might contaminate water in nearby streams, ponds, or water features.

Treated burlap is sold as a landscape fabric and is also commonly used to wrap the rootballs of trees. Most treated burlap is a drab olive green color, while untreated burlap is a natural tan color. Using untreated burlap eliminates the risk of introducing a fungicide into your soil or local watershed. Untreated burlap is widely available in rolls at nurseries and from mail-order companies, including Peaceful Valley Farm & Garden Supply (groworganic.com). Coffee shops and roasting companies are also great free sources for untreated burlap bags.

TECHNIQUE

Pest Protection

Is there a pepper spray I can use to control pests?

Steven Wilson
Denver, Colorado

In a nutshell: Pepper sprays can offer your plants protection from nibblers like rabbits by making them taste unappetizing. The sprays also may repel two-spotted spider mites.

The whole story: Researchers from Kentucky State University created extracts from the fruits of different pepper species, then confined mites in closed petri dishes containing filter papers soaked with the extracts. In 24 hours, the pepper extracts killed about half of the spider mites. More promising was the repellent effect almost all of the pepper extracts had on mites. When the scientists investigated further, they found that the chemicals responsible for the toxicity and repellency were not the same ones that cause the fruit to be hot, but other, unidentified constituents.

To make your own pepper spray, first puree two chile peppers in a blender with water, strain, and add water to make one gallon of pepper concentrate. Then mix $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the concentrate per gallon of fresh water. Add a tablespoon of liquid soap to help the spray stick to the surface of your plants.



NEWS

Edited by Beth Huxra

CALENDAR

AUGUST

1 Direct-seed carrots, kohlrabi, and radishes early this month for a fall vegetable garden.

August tip Prick two holes in the bottom of gallon jug, fill with water, and bury neck deep next to a plant that likes steady watering.

4-11 Farmers' Market Week Support your local growers! Check out localharvest.org to find a farmers' market near you.

16-19 Palisade Peach Festival Palisade, CO Mouthwatering Palisade Peaches are the pride of Colorado.



SEPTEMBER

OCTOBER

6 Tour d'Organics, Portland, OR Portlanders bust out their bikes for this 30-to-100-mile ride, with stops at local farms and markets.

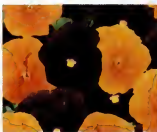
October tip Don't haul all those leaves to your compost pile. Simply mow over them, then spread them around your perennials.



8 Honey Festival, Battle Creek, MI This delicious, sticky goo never goes bad and contains no fat, cholesterol, or sodium.

31 Halloween Plant a cauldron-shaped container with cold-tolerant, black and orange 'Trick or Treat Mix' pansies.

September tip To weed poison ivy, put a plastic bag over your arm. Pull the ivy and turn the bag inside out over it. Then toss.



Autumn is a second spring when every leaf is a flower. —Albert Camus

SCIENCE OF LIVING

Sweet and Seedless

WHERE DOES A SEEDLESS watermelon come from? The short answer is: from a "mule" plant. The story begins, oddly enough, with the autumn crocus, *Colchicum autumnale*, which produces a chemical called colchicine. When the first leaves (cotyledons) of watermelons are treated with colchicine, a small number of the plants end up with four sets of chromosomes, double the number they would naturally have. Watermelon and other squashes have two kinds of flowers, male and female, and offspring get half of their chromosomes from each parent plant. When the female flower of

a *tetraploid* (plant with four sets of chromosomes) receives pollen from the male flower of a normal *diploid* (plant with two sets of chromosomes), each offspring ends up with three sets of chromosomes. These *triploids* grow into plants and produce flowers and fruit. However, the cell divisions that produce egg cells require a precise alignment of chromosome pairs, an impossible feat with the odd number of copies in a triploid. The result—a seedless melon. One thing to know: Flowers of seedless watermelon need to be pollinated with pollen from a normal plant before they'll bear any fruit.

Good to know: Seedless melons require very little soil to grow.





Tough love: Some established shrubs thrive without pampering.

RESEARCH REPORT

Hold Your Water

Some ornamental plants grow better in a drought.

Findings: Many ornamental plants will not only survive a summer drought; they may actually benefit from less water, say researchers in England. Regulated Deficit Irrigation—that's the scientific phrase for withholding water—resulted in well-branched plants that required less summer pruning. The plants in the study, which included smoke tree, redtwig dogwood, and forsythia, adapted to the drier conditions by transpiring less and growing shoots with shorter internodes (spaces between branches). Irrigated at a rate of just half their optimal water-use rate, the trees and shrubs were nicely shaped and compact. Even when irrigation was reduced even further, to 25 percent of the water-use rate, there was little noticeable leaf injury.

Our advice: Watch plants during extended periods of dry weather, and if the leaves are wilted after the sun goes down, they need a deep soaking. But if not, you need not irrigate them. Many trees and shrubs survive drought without any watering at all.

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THEN & NOW

Swept Away

THEN "Where are our children's farms?" asked Robert Rodale in the September 1977 issue of *Organic Gardening and Farming*. He was referring not to the farm buildings and equipment, but to the erosion of the rich layer of topsoil that once covered much of the land in the United States. In 1977, unsustainable farming practices were causing a staggering 9 to 12 tons of topsoil to be carried away by wind or water each year from every acre of farmland. A topsoil loss of 5 tons a year per acre was considered "acceptable."



FACT: Human activity causes 10 times more soil erosion than all natural processes combined.

SOURCE: UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF GEOLOGICAL SCIENCES

NOW Soil erosion has decreased 43 percent in the past 20 years, but we still lose about 2 billion tons of soil a year to storm winds and waters. The Natural Resources Conservation Service now focuses on building soil carbon, rather than just managing farmland for acceptable soil loss, and recommends "using well-known technology in a new way"—i.e., building soil organic matter by using cover crops, crop rotation, and reduced tillage. For OG readers, there was never any other way.

FROM LEFT: BETTMANN CORP.; JAY CHAMBERS/GETTY IMAGES

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Perfect Picking

You've spent all summer working in your garden. Now it's time to reap your rewards. But is that melon ripe? Find out how to harvest the fruits of your labor at their peak of flavor. —Debbie Leung

Asparagus. Harvest the third year after planting. When stalks reach 6 to 9 inches tall, cut or break them at the soil line.

Beans. Beans snap in half when they're ready. Pick them every other day.

Broccoli/cauliflower. Cut 6 inches below the fully formed main head. Continue cutting side shoots as they form.

Cantaloupe/muskmelon. When skin is netted and the fruits separate easily from the vine, melons are sweet as can be.

Carrots. Harvest when roots are at least ¼ inch in diameter, and before the

ground freezes, or protect them with a thick layer of straw.

Corn. Puncture a kernel with your fingernail. If a milky fluid flows out, it's time. If the liquid is toothpasty, the corn is overmature. Silk should be brown.

Cucumbers. Cut from vine when cukes are a deep green and seeds are still soft.

Storage onions. When about half of the leaves topple, push the rest over. Let



Squeeze test:
If a corn kernel's liquid runs clear, it's not quite ready.

onions cure in the soil for a week.

Potatoes. Dig spuds when the vines die back.

Winter squash. Harvest when your thumbnail does not readily pierce the skin. Leave a

2-inch stem to avoid storage rot.

Tomatoes. Harvest at full color. An overripe tomato quickly loses its firmness. Never put them in the refrigerator.

Watermelon. Pick when the tendril closest to the fruit's stem withers and the belly turns cream to yellowish.

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SOIL



Vetch vigor:
The nodules on vetch's roots add nitrogen to your garden's soil.

SOIL HEALTH

Cover Your Asset

As your garden's most valuable asset, the soil deserves your attention and protection all year round. With cover crops—a.k.a. *green manure*—you can build the soil's fertility, texture, and beneficial microbe population and prevent weeds from taking over during the off-season. And you don't need to have a large plot or a degree in agronomy to use cover crops effectively in your garden. These five cover-cropping strategies work well in gardens of any size and under a wide range of conditions. They are the best investment you can make in your garden at this time of year. —Genevieve Slocum

► Hairy Vetch and Cereal Rye: A Perfect Pair

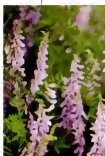
Rice and beans aren't the only way that grains and legumes naturally complement each other. These two crops work together well as soil-builders, too.

- Rye creates a dense groundcover quickly, crowding out weeds and providing winter groundcover while the vetch begins to fix nitrogen.

- Rye's dense, fibrous root mass anchors soil to prevent erosion, while hairy vetch's taproot houses nitrogen-fixing soil bacteria, scavenges nutrients from deep in the soil, and carves passages in the soil for drainage.

- Rye complements vetch's high nitrogen content with carbon-rich material that will add organic matter when turned under.

Rye is also allelopathic, which means it inhibits the germination of other



seeds—reducing your weed worries. Allow it about three weeks to decompose before planting your following crop.

Hardiness. Rye grows at low temperatures, making it convenient for fall planting. Hairy vetch is quite winter-hardy also, provided you choose seed that was grown locally, or north of your location. Rye shelters it from cold, while giving it a structure to climb for access to sunlight.

Planting. Broadcast about 1¼ pounds of rye and ¼ pound hairy vetch per 1,000 square feet; then rake soil over it.

Next spring. Turn the crop under before the vetch flowers and the rye forms tough stems (after heading). However, the more growth you allow prior to flowering, the more nitrogen you'll get out of the vetch.



► Oats: Diversify

"Cover crops from the grass family such as oats, rye, or sudangrass help diversify the rotations in the garden, since most of the crops we plant in the home garden are broadleaves,"

says Steve Zwinger, research specialist at North Dakota State University.

For wet soil. Oats are tolerant of wet, heavy, and poorly drained soils.

Planting. Plant oats in late summer or early fall, allowing them to mature before frost sets in. Sow 2 to 2½ pounds per 1,000 square feet.

Die-back. Oats die back with a hard frost, leaving beautifully thick straw mulch by spring. Just dig holes into your oat straw and "no-till" plant your spring crop into it, adding compost for nitrogen. Or you can dig the residue under, wait a couple of weeks, and plant your following crop.



► Crimson Clover: Spring-Blooming Beauty

This clover's deep crimson flowers are eye-catching, not to mention bee-catching. Crimson clover draws pollinators and other beneficial insects to prey on pests lurking near your vegetable crops.

Planting. Planted at about ½ pound per 1,000 square feet, it can potentially fix upwards of 100 pounds of nitrogen per acre. Broadcast the tiny seeds and rake them gently into the soil. Plant it in late summer for midspring incorporation.

Living mulch. Experiment with crimson clover as a living mulch, interspersed in your vegetables, for three reasons: weed suppression, nitrogen fixation, and a magnet for beneficials. "Sprinkle crimson clover seeds under your tomatoes in spring and let them fill in the spaces between plants," advises Pam Ruch, manager of the OG Test Garden near Emmaus, Pennsylvania. "The clover blooms the following spring."



► Buckwheat: Speedy Seeds

Sometimes called a "smother crop" because it shoots up fast and shades out weeds with its broad leaves, buck-

wheat is your ideal nonlegume summer cover crop. "Plant it after you pull out your early crops, and turn it under before planting greens in late summer," Pam says. Buckwheat grows and flowers in

just six weeks. Broadcast 1 to 2½ pounds per 1,000 square feet. **Bee-nificials.**

Dave Wilson, research agronomist at the Rodale Institute, has observed the visible pollinators buckwheat draws: "Honeybees and bumblebees are noticeable bio-indicators because they are big enough to see easily; if they are there, you know that many other beneficial insects are there as well." **And...** Buckwheat increases soil calcium, available phosphorus, and potassium.



► Sorghum- sudangrass: Ease Your Troubles

Plant this warm-season hybrid if you want to recover a troubled plot

with the maximum organic matter and allelopathy of a warm-season cover crop.

Managing. Sow 1 pound per 1,000 square feet. "If you whack it back once during the summer when it's 3 to 4 feet tall, you'll stimulate increased root growth to deeper levels, which is very good for building organic matter and improves the soil tilth and soil structure. Doing this will make it grow new stems, or tillers—the young tillers are not as tough as mature ones, and they will decompose easier," says Wilson.

Test-gardener approved. "In our test garden, we renovated a bed that had a severe thistle problem by planting Piper sudangrass in late spring, cutting it back 3 feet in summer, and letting it die in winter," Pam reports. "The bed is now thistle-free, and the soil is beautiful."

W W For a list of sources that sell untreated and certified organic cover crop seeds, visit OrganicGardening.com.

THE DIRT

Evaporation removes about ½ inch of moisture from the soil's surface area each day. Weed cover in your garden reduces evaporation, but the weeds suck up an equal amount of moisture at other levels of the soil.

What is it about the lawn that is so appealing? As an outdoor welcome mat, this carpet of green invites us into the landscape like no other sight. It beckons adults and children alike to step outside and stretch, to play and to picnic. The lawn is our leisure. Even the smell of freshly cut grass can have us imagining summer's freedom.

Organic Lawn Care

BY LORI BALL

The Dark Side of the Lawn.

For all its beauty, the American lawn is also a beastly burden. A report by the American Wildlife Federation indicates that 30% of water consumed on the East Coast goes to watering lawns, doubling to 60% on the West Coast. Water is not the only thing consumed in great quantities. The average suburban lawn receives 10 times as much chemical pesticide per acre as farmland. Overly consumptive, lawns are also waste producers. Carting grass cuttings to the curb turns organic materials into municipal waste.

Go Organic.

Conventional lawn care is largely responsible for the staggering statistics surrounding the lawn. You already know how to care for plants organically in your garden. Use the same approach to building a healthy lawn. With these techniques for lawn care, you can enjoy healthy and green grass without worry.

Start with Soil. Soil health is the foundation for healthy plant growth—including grass. *As in your garden, sufficient organic matter, a proper balance of nutrients, and high biological activity are all needed.* Apply a slow-release organic fertilizer such as Bradfield Organics® Luscious Lawn® fertilizer to restore nutrients and support microbial life in the soil. Nutrients in Bradfield's products are derived from natural sources including alfalfa, molasses, sulfate of potash, and meat meal. Detailed information on fertilizer application and soil basics is available online at www.bradfieldorganics.com.



ADVERTORIAL

Mowing Matters.

Grass length is important to your lawn's ability to out-compete weeds, retain moisture, and develop strong roots. Cut grass to 2.5 to 3.5 inches tall and leave clippings to mulch back into soil which will provide about 2 pounds of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet of lawn per year, and eliminates the waste issue.

Plagued by dandelions?

You may need to change your soil pH. Dandelions love a pH of about 7.5 while grass loves a pH of about 6.5. Add lime to lower the pH.

Treat weeds organically. Non-toxic and natural corn gluten kills weed seedlings within days of application while adding nitrogen to your soil. Bradfield Organics® Luscious Lawn® corn gluten fertilizer is a natural and safe weed killer.

Water

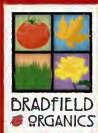
Wisely. Grasses will perform better when the entire root zone is saturated and allowed to dry between each watering. On an average, a lawn needs about one inch of water per week which soaks to about 6 inches.



Join Forces for Organic Lawn Care.

Changing the way that lawns are managed and maintained can have significant environmental impact. SafeLawns.org is a non-profit organization dedicated to bringing about an industry-wide change to organic lawn care through initiatives such as their organic lawn certification program and efforts to legislate natural lawn care on schools and campuses. For homeowners getting started, SafeLawns offers a valuable online directory at www.SafeLawns.org of products and companies such as Bradfield Organics whose products are part of a natural lawn care approach.





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LANDSCAPE

Edited by Therese Ciesinski



WHY IT WORKS

1 A Warm Welcome

This driveway is an integral part of the design of the landscape. In fact, it barely looks like a driveway at all, but rather an alternate, but equally welcoming, path to the house.

2 Double Duty

The colored concrete and river stone strip are attractive and interesting to look at. The central strip also serves a purpose: to help absorb storm water runoff. The channels in the concrete direct water toward the stones.

3 Lots of Variety

A postage-stamp-size front yard is enlivened (and given privacy) with plantings instead of grass. Dark red and burgundy plants complement both the brick and the concrete.

4 A Big Gesture

The extra "wow" in this yard is provided by the rambler roses trained into the two mature trees at the front of the house.

Landscaper's Tip

Tie the colors of your walkway and driveway materials in with your house colors.

SOUND ADVICE

Super Soaker Driveways

THE ROCKS IN THE PHOTOS ABOVE AND AT LEFT allow rainwater to percolate into the soil, filtering out oil and other contaminants in the water. These kinds of porous, driveway materials are gaining popularity due to concerns about runoff, groundwater pollution, and erosion. Here, some options; learn more at toolbase.com. **Porous asphalt or concrete:** Applied like regular asphalt or concrete, porous kinds differ only in ingredient proportions. **Plastic grid systems:** Interlocking honeycombs (often recycled plastic) are filled with aggregate and gravel or aggregate and a soil mixture that grass grows in. **Pavers:** Concrete or stone blocks laid in sand are attractive, low-maintenance—and pricey. **Crushed stone, cinder, crushed seashells:** These are cheap, attractive, readily available, and easy to maintain (just throw more on top), but snow removal is a pain.





ANIMAL TRACKS

Praying Mantis

THE PRAYING MANTIS (OR MANTID) GETS ITS NAME from the appearance of its front legs, which it holds in a prayerlike manner. Mantises are not harmful to people and are an important part of any garden's ecosystem, but don't expect them to keep an unwanted insect population under control. They have voracious appetites and eat beneficial insects, pests, and each other.

Just the Facts

- The praying mantis is the only insect that can turn its head 180 degrees.
- The mantis has five eyes—three simple eyes arranged in a triangle between its antennae, and two compound eyes.
- A large mantis is capable of catching and eating a hummingbird.
- Mantises are often the color of the plants they live on, usually green or brown. This is for predation, not protection. Mantises do not actively hunt; they wait, motionless, for an unsuspecting meal to wander within reach.
- Females lay eggs in a frothy, gummy mass that sticks to twigs, branches, houses, fences, or other objects.
- Encourage mantises in your garden by allowing some vegetation to grow to provide support for egg cases and for cover.

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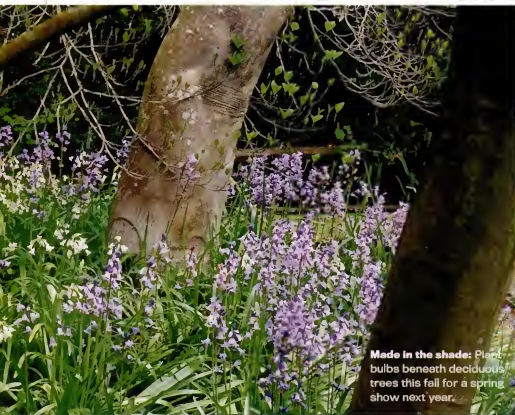
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Made in the shade: Plant bulbs beneath deciduous trees this fall for a spring show next year.

ORGANIC SOLUTIONS

Spring Awakening

After a gray, cold winter, a colorful carpet of crocus or grape hyacinths beneath a tree's budding branches is enough to make any gardener's soul leap with joy. Even sweeter is that your initial labor is repaid by these bulbs' tendency to set seed or produce offset bulbs—increasing your flowery field of dreams without any further effort from you. To turn this dream into reality, consider what the tree needs versus what the bulb needs, then pick up your tool of choice and start digging.

Siting. When planting spring bulbs beneath trees this fall, remember that if a tree competes with bulbs for light, food, and water, the tree always wins. Give the bulbs a fighting chance by planting them under trees that:

- Are deciduous (lose their leaves each fall), which allows sunlight to reach the ground in late winter and early spring, when the bulbs sprout.
- Have deep root systems or large surface roots, such as oak, redbud, hawthorn, and southern magnolia.
- Have limbs starting high up the trunk, casting light shade.
- Avoid planting bulbs under trees that:
- Are evergreen; they cast shade all year.

- Have shallow or fibrous root systems, such as sugar maples.
- Are allelopathic (meaning they contain compounds that thwart the growth of neighboring plants), such as black walnut, black locust, or southern waxmyrtle.
- Have branches low to the ground.

A tree's roots don't just extend downward; they spread out just inches below the soil, and go past the tree's canopy. This makes them quite vulnerable to injury. To minimize potential damage:

- Choose small bulbs. They require smaller holes, which means less disruption to the tree's root system (and less work from you).
- Plant between the tree's roots.

THE BEST BULBS FOR PLANTING UNDER TREES

Early spring-bloomers are the best bulbs to plant under trees: Tiny in size, they flower before most trees leaf out, so the bulbs receive the sunlight and water they need to thrive.

- Crocus (*Crocus*)
- Dwarf iris (*Iris reticulata*)
- Early daffodils (*Narcissus*)
- Glory of the snow (*Chionodoxa*)
- Grape hyacinth (*Muscari*)
- Hardy cyclamen (*Cyclamen*)
- Lebanon squill (*Puschkinia scilloides*)
- Siberian squill (*Scilla sibirica*)
- Snowdrop (*Galanthus*)
- Snowflake (*Leucojum*)
- Windflower (*Anemone blanda*)
- Winter aconite (*Eranthis*)

- Avoid tearing roots, and never cut one to fit in a bulb; this weakens the tree.
- Don't "plant" bulbs by piling soil on top of them in lieu of digging holes; the extra layer of soil keeps necessary oxygen from reaching tree roots.

Planting. Prepare to dig: This is a job for humans, not machinery, because any kind of equipment can damage the tree. For a lush, flowery glade feeling, plan on 20 bulbs per square foot. You'll get a natural, unstudied look if you toss the bulbs and plant them where they land.

Use a small hand pick or Japanese weeding knife, suggests Carol Long, assistant garden curator at Winterthur, an historic house and garden in Delaware, where she has planted thousands of bulbs. The blades on these tools are thinner and sharper than what you'll find on traditional bulb planters.

And "make it a two-person job," Long says. "One digs the holes; the other drops the bulbs in and replaces the soil."

Watering and fertilizing. Water the bulbs after planting them in fall. No need to fertilize—mulching with ground-up leaves or compost provides all the nutrients the bulbs need.

PLANT WORTH HAVING

Toad Lily

Tricyrtis hirta

Why grow it: If you love the otherworldly look of orchids but find their care daunting, toad lilies are the ticket. Blatant orchid impersonators, the flowers are sprinkled with dark spots or edged in contrasting colors. And just like orchids, the flowers last—up to six weeks. The difference is that toad lilies are a heck of a lot easier to care for. And they grow outdoors, not indoors. Okay, and they have *toad* in their name. But you can't have everything.

Vital statistics: A member of the lily family (not the toad family), toad lilies flower in fall in yellow, white, lavender, pink, and purple. Plants grow 2 to 3 feet tall. The sword-like leaves on many of the newer hybrids are as speckled and colorful as the flowers. Native to Japan, they grow in USDA Plant Hardiness Zones 4 to 8.

What it needs: Toad lilies need woodland-type soil: one that's rich in organic matter, water-retentive but well drained.



They grow in part sun to shady conditions. Mulch with compost or other organic matter after planting.

SOURCES

Digging Dog Nursery, 707-937-1130, diggingdog.com

Klehm's Song Sparrow Nursery, 800-553-3715,

songsparrow.com

Plant Delights Nursery, 919-772-4794, plantdelights.com

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FOOD

Edited by Will Evans Galloway



HOMEGROWN FAVORITE

Very roots: Mâche is one of the most cold-hardy salad greens.

Mâche

The history of mâche—a tender, sweet salad green first foraged by peasants and then cultivated by French royalty—sounds a bit like a Cinderella story, garden style. But you won't need a fairy godmother to get mâche to your garden party. This supremely easy-to-grow green handles cold better than spinach, never becomes bitter, and thrives with the wave of a wand—a watering wand, that is—just once or twice a week. —Barbara Wilde

Growing Guide

Mâche (*Valerianella locusta*) is a native European field weed that people began to cultivate in the 18th century. This winter annual or biennial forms a small rosette about 3 to 4 inches in diameter and only an inch or two high. The exquisitely tender leaves have a delicate, sweet, almost flowery flavor, and, as mâche is not in the lettuce family and contains no milky latex, it never develops a bitter taste.

Preparing a site. Mâche grows best in full sun and well-drained, moderately fertile soil. It forms a dense network of very superficial roots, so there is no need to work the soil deeply in preparation for planting. An inch or two of compost worked into the surface of the soil will provide all the fertility it needs. Cultivate and water your mâche bed three weeks before planting. When the weed seeds germinate, cultivate shallowly to eliminate them and again once more just before planting.

When to plant. To succeed at growing mâche, you need to understand that its life cycle is adapted to the cool winters and dry summers of the Mediterranean. In its natural

rhythm, the seeds fall to the ground in summer, where they lie dormant until autumn rains permit germination. To mimic this natural pattern, begin planting large-seeded varieties in late July if you garden in USDA Plant Hardiness Zone 7 and north. Gardeners in extremely cold zones (3 or 4) can plant mâche as a very early spring crop, sowing the seed at the first thaw. Southern growers (Zones 7 to 9) should sow staggered plantings of small-seeded varieties from July through October for winter harvests.

Sowing. Plant in double rows 6 to 8 inches apart. If you plan on planting an entire bed, simply broadcast the seeds over the soil, rake them in lightly, and water with a fine spray nozzle. There is usually no need to thin the plants. For a family of four, a bed 3 feet by 6 to 8 feet long will keep you in luxurious salads for two to three months. [Continued on page 30](#)



Newbie hint Make successive plantings of mâche at two-week intervals to prolong your salad-eating.

Master's tip Take advantage of mâche's weedy heritage by undersowing other plants—such as brassicas or corn—with mâche. This little plant will provide lush salad harvests both during and after the "big crops."



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Mâche, like many "wild" greens, is super-healthy. A 100-gram serving has only 19 calories. Mâche contains three times more vitamin C than lettuce. It is also rich in beta-carotene and B₆, B₉, and vitamin E, and an excellent source of omega-3 fatty acids.

Growing. Once your mâche seedlings have around eight leaves, weed thoroughly, then water to settle the disturbed earth. During dry periods, water once or twice a week early in the day to promote rapid growth and prevent mildew, which occasionally appears under drought conditions.

Harvesting. You can begin harvesting at any time, but you will get the best results if you wait approximately 50 days from planting or until the plants have at least 12 leaves. Harvest by cutting the whole plant through the main root just below the soil line. Do not separate the leaves before serving. Rather, keep the plants whole, unless they have become very large and complex (which can occur near the end of an overwintered crop). In that case, pull the plant apart at its base into tufts of leaves.

Mâche can harbor a lot of grit. Wash the plants in a sink with three changes of water before lifting the plants out to dry (on a towel or in a salad spinner). Washed and dried plants keep in excellent condition if refrigerated in a plastic bag for three or four days.

Recommended Varieties

Mâche varieties are divided into two types: large-seeded, which grow best when planted in very early spring or late summer, and small-seeded, which overwinter well. Gourmet Seed International (505-398-6111, gourmetseed.com) has a nice selection of varieties. If you can't find mâche seeds in your favorite catalog or at your local nursery, look for it under its other names: corn salad or lamb's lettuce.

'Cambrai'. Dark green, with relatively large, densely packed leaves and excellent cold-resistance. Heirloom, small-seeded type.

'Medallion'. A large-seeded variety with improved cold resistance and gourmet quality leaves.

'Piedmont'. A distinct species (*V. eriocarpa*); very large leaves adapted to hot climates.

'Vit'. Long, thick, dark green leaves for winter harvests. This small-seeded variety also performs better in damp soils.

Barbara Wilde writes about gardening and cooking in France on her Web site, frenchgardening.com.

HOMEMADE FLAVOR

Flavorful Fall Salads

ALTHOUGH YOU CAN ADD MÂCHE to mixed salads, you'll best appreciate the delicate flavor of its tender leaves when it is served as the only green. Sprinkled with a few drops of olive oil, leafy mâche bouquets also make lovely garnishes.

Mâche salad with red grapes and port wine vinaigrette. Reduce ½ cup ruby port over medium heat. Cool and combine with 2 tablespoons sherry vinegar and 5 tablespoons olive oil. Season with salt and pepper. Toss with a big bowl of mâche combined with about 2 cups halved red or purple grapes.

Mâche salad with roasted beets and walnut vinaigrette. Over-roast 2 medium beets. Peel, cube, and combine while still warm with a vinaigrette of 2 tablespoons walnut oil, 3 tablespoons olive oil, 2 tablespoons sherry vinegar, and 2 tablespoons minced shallot. Season with salt and pepper. Toss with a large bowl of mâche and a couple of handfuls of lightly toasted walnuts plus some chopped chervil.

Mâche salad with rose vinaigrette. Begin 3 days in advance. Heat 3 cups white wine vinegar to a bare simmer and pour over 2 cups very fragrant, organic rose petals in a ceramic bowl. Cover and marinate at room temperature for 3 days. Strain into a jar or bottle. Dress a bowl of mâche with a vinaigrette of 2 tablespoons rose vinegar and 5 tablespoons olive oil. Season with salt and pepper. Garnish with more organic rose petals.



Fit for a king! Louis XIV's gardener, de Quintinie, popularized mâche.



Well preserved: Jessie James freezes, cans, dries, and juices his tomatoes.

TECHNIQUE

Beginner Tomato Preservation

HAVE MORE TOMATOES THAN YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH? Jessie James can sympathize. As a passionate, lifelong gardener, James always ends up growing more vegetables than he can eat or give away. So he decided to become a volunteer Master Food Preserver (MFP)—a program offered by his local University of California cooperative extension office. MFPs undergo an intense training in food preservation safety and learn how to can, pickle, freeze, dehydrate, and smoke foods. In return for the training, MFPs volunteer to teach people how to preserve food safely at home. One of James's favorite ways to preserve tomatoes is to dehydrate them and make tomato powder. A tiny jar of this trendy gourmet condiment sells for upwards of \$6 at specialty food stores, but it couldn't be easier to make. All you need is tomatoes and time.

1 Meaty, smaller tomatoes (no bigger than an apple), such as paste tomatoes, work best, but James has also used cherry tomatoes. "You'll be surprised how many tomatoes this takes," he notes. Wash and dry the fruit. Then, using a serrated knife, slice meaty tomatoes ½ inch thick, juicier tomatoes ⅓ to ¾ inch thick, and cherry tomatoes in half.

2 Dry the tomatoes until they are very dry in a food dehydrator (this can take eight hours or more). The fruit should feel dry to the touch (not tacky) and snap in half easily. Check the dryness level often, because smaller tomatoes and paste tomatoes finish faster than large or juicy ones.

3 Place the dried tomatoes in a blender or food processor and grind them into a fine powder. Store the powder in a lidded glass jar in a cool, dark, dry place such as a cupboard. Use in chili, soups, sauces, and dressings to add an intense tomato flavor.

***No dehydrator? No problem.** Quarter or halve tomatoes, place on a rimmed baking sheet, and bake on your oven's lowest heat setting until very dry (seven hours or more). Check the fruit's dryness often, being careful not to burn the slices.



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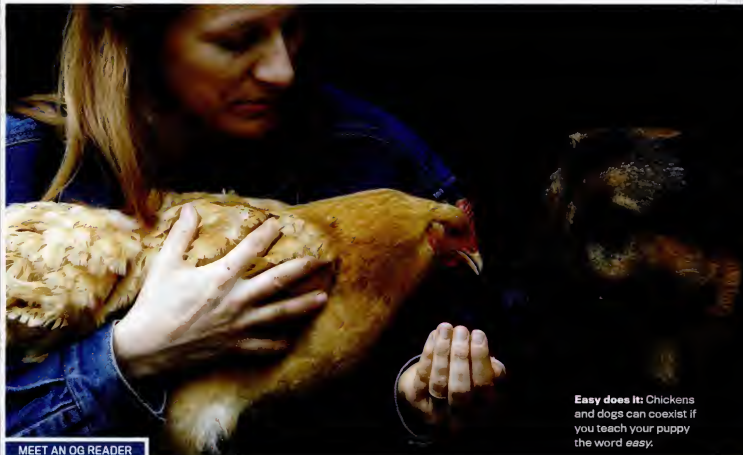
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PEOPLE

Edited by Perrick Layton



MEET AN OG READER

Easy does it: Chickens and dogs can coexist if you teach your puppy the word *easy*.

Puppy Love

KELLY HUDSON, KNOWN AS "COUNTRYKITTY" in the *OrganicGardening.com* online community, relies on chickens to help control Japanese beetles, the most troublesome pest in her garden. In the evenings, Hudson shakes shrub branches so that her small mixed flock of a dozen chickens can eat the beetles that fall to the ground. Hudson, who says her hometown of Elkton, Kentucky, is so small that the dogs and deer outnumber the people, shuts the chickens away at night to keep the owls and coyotes from laying claim to a hen or two.

Hudson, who is working toward a nursing degree, has a husband and two teenage children, a cat, and two dogs, as well as the chickens.

"I always saw my older relatives—good country folks—gardening. When I was young, my folks fed five kids out of a large garden," Hudson reminisces. "My grandfather had a garden, and he hired me to pick potato bugs at a penny apiece. Grandma made great rhubarb pie! Great-grandma gardened into her 80s, and I recall eating huge salmon-colored raspberries off her canes in summer."

Pooch and Hen Detente

Hudson trained her German shepherd, Kari, to live peacefully with her chickens. Teach your puppy, Hudson recommends, to treat things "easy," from treats to people to the cat. Make sure he understands the word *easy*.

- As the puppy matures, introduce him to the chickens through the fence. If he barks or charges the fence, reprimand him with a sharp "no!" and remind him to be "easy."
- After your puppy is comfortable with them from a distance, catch one and introduce him up close.
- Later, take him into the hen yard and practice the commands so you can praise and pet him with the chickens nearby. Do these things consistently, and eventually your dog will accept the chickens as part of the family.



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WATERWORKS 2007

Drought Insurance for Your Garden

DURING THE LONG, DRY SUMMER OF 2002, Linda Frank of Jackson, New Jersey (an OG reader known as "gardenz" in our online community), was faced with a very difficult decision: choosing which of her plants would live and which she would let die. With local water restrictions in place, Linda was forced to think in terms of garden triage. She let the annuals go first and focused on saving the perennials.

This agonizing process led Frank to come up with a plan to ensure that she had sufficient water for her garden every season. She set up a rainwater harvesting system like those *Organic Gardening* is providing to 20 community gardens this year. Frank and her husband cut off part of a downspout from a gutter attached to their home, screwed on flexible spouting, and directed the rainfall into a 75-gallon barrel they had set on two layers of cinder blocks. "I was totally surprised at how little rain was needed to fill the barrel," Frank reports.

Fact: 36 states are projecting water shortages in the next 10 years.

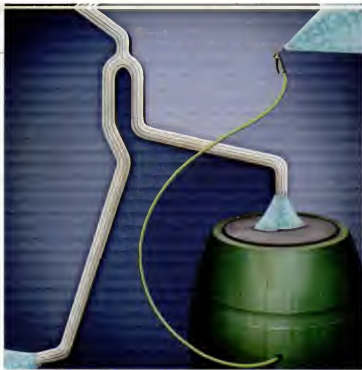
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If you want to follow the Franks' example, these tips they've learned from their experience will help you:

- **Don't haul water.** Put the barrel close to where you need the water.
- **Place the barrel in a shaded area**, if possible. Water evaporates more quickly from a barrel set in full sun than it does from a barrel in the shade.
- **Try to obtain an offset diverter**, which functions as a Y splitter, for your downspout. It allows for two downspouts, one to the rain barrel and the other to the ground. Water flow can be directed from one downspout to the other simply by flipping a lever.
- **Never use a barrel with an open top.** If the barrel does not have a lid, use a screen to keep children and small animals from getting into it. Use BT dunks to prevent mosquitoes from breeding in a barrel with a screened lid.
- **Set up an overflow.** Even a moderate rainstorm can surpass a barrel's storage capacity. Direct the overflow away from your home's foundation and into a well-drained area or a pond.


SOURCES

For more information or to buy a rainwater harvesting kit for your home, check out these resources:

Rain Barrel Guide, rainbarrelguide.com
 Clean Air Gardening, cleanaingardening.com/rainbarrels.html
 Gardener's Supply Co., gardeners.com



To learn more about OG's WaterWorks 2007 campaign and how you can get involved, visit OrganicGardening.com.



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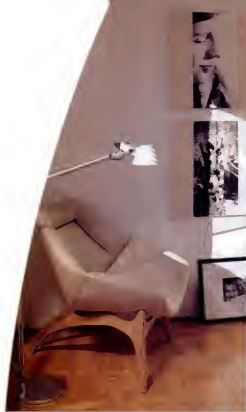
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KANSAS CITY

Beanstalk Garden

A SPIDER IS HELPING IN THE BATTLE AGAINST CHILDHOOD OBESITY in Kansas City. "Charlotte the Orb Weaver is a favorite of the kids," says Mary Roduner, Children's Garden Assistant for the Kansas City Edible Schoolyard, a program that teaches kids about nutrition and science in the garden to help them learn about healthy food.

KC Edible Schoolyard began one year ago with grants from the Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City and KC Healthy Kids. The program helps schools establish gardens to use as an educational tool.

The Beanstalk Children's Garden is a field trip destination for children to learn about food, gardening, insects, and plant science. "Last year we planted a 'Three Sisters' garden [beans, corn, and squash interplanted as Native Americans did]," Roduner says. "It was doing very well until a woodchuck got it. We left the remains in place to teach the kids about our early ancestors and the struggles they had growing enough food for the winter." The garden also includes cotton and flax to teach about spinning and weaving fiber.

For more information about the KC Edible Schoolyard program, contact Mary Roduner at 816-931-3877 or mroduner@sbcglobal.net. To find out how to start a community garden in your area, contact the American Community Gardening Association at 877-275-2242 or communitygarden.org.

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SmartBran™ Curried Squash Soup



- 1 tbs. vegetable oil
- 4 tsp. Madras-style (mild) curry powder
- 2 pkg. (12 oz. each) frozen, pureed, unseasoned squash
- 4 c. vegetable broth
- 1 c. SmartBran® Cereal
- Salt & freshly ground black pepper to taste
- 3 tbs. finely chopped cilantro, for garnish

1. In a 3-quart, heavy soup pot, heat oil over medium heat.
2. Add curry powder and stir for 30 seconds. Immediately set both blocks of frozen squash into pot.
3. Add SmartBran®, and pour on broth. Bring mixture to a boil.
4. Cover and cook over medium-high heat for 5 minutes. Stir well, breaking up any blocks of squash.
5. Season soup with salt and pepper. Continue cooking until all squash is defrosted and all SmartBran® cereal has dissolved and thickened soup, about 2 more minutes.
6. Ladle into soup plates. Garnish each portion generously with cilantro.

Yield: Serves 6

This recipe was created especially for Nature's Path® by Lorna Sass, the award-winning cookbook author of "WHOLE GRAINS EVERY DAY, EVERY WAY". Check out the Nature's Path® website for more product info & great recipes.

A CLEAN GLASS OF WATER

BY LORI BALL

Your drinking water may not be as pure as it looks. Find out what might be coming out of your faucet and what you can do to ensure it's as pure as can be.

After a few hours with your hands in the dirt, nothing is as refreshing as a cool glass of water. Though that satisfying splash may quench your thirst, it may not measure up to your organic standards. As a gardener you carefully avoid chemicals in your garden, but can you say the same for your drinking water? Americans are fortunate to enjoy the world's safest drinking water supply, but safety standards and purity are not one and the same. While municipal water treatment eliminates serious threats to water safety, purity is lost in the process.

You can easily improve your drinking water's quality with a household filter. First, let's look behind tap water's good clean looks to help you understand what the issues are. Then you can factor them in when selecting a filter system.

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WHAT'S IN YOUR WATER?

Under The Right To Know Amendment, water utilities are required by the EPA to report on water quality testing. This annual water quality report, called The Consumer Confidence Report, is available from your water supplier and will tell you where drinking water comes from, and what contaminants are in it.

If your water comes from a cistern or well rather than a municipal source, you are responsible for protecting your water supply. The EPA suggests testing your water annually. Your local extension service is a good source for information on water testing and can direct you to a certified laboratory.

Because pregnant women and young children are highly susceptible to lead, it is a good idea to test your water specifically for its presence if you have these vulnerable groups living in your home. The test costs only about \$25.

Common Contaminants

Chlorine: Drinking water owes its safety largely to the addition of chlorine, which is used to kill the disease-causing bacteria and viruses found in untreated water. It also reacts with naturally occurring materials in water to form disinfection byproducts. Prolonged exposure to these byproducts increases your risk of liver damage and cancer.

Fluoride: In many areas, it is added to drinking water to promote dental health. Research has shown that prolonged exposure to excess fluoride (more than the standard level of 4 mg/L) may result in bone disease. For children under age nine, whose teeth are still developing, the EPA fluoride standard is 2 mg/L.

Lead: Between the water treatment plant and your faucet, water may pass through corroded plumbing which can cause lead to leach into it. Children and pregnant women are most susceptible to lead-related health risks such as neurological damage, kidney and liver problems, and developmental delays in children.

Radon: Although regulated by public water utilities, radon may accumulate in underground water sources, a concern for those on private wells. Exposure to radon in drinking water and by inhaling the gas as it is released from the water during showers, washing, and laundering increases your cancer risk.

Volatile Organic Compounds: VOCs are commonly found in fuels, solvents, cosmetics, drugs, and dry cleaning solutions. They get into

drinking water through improper industrial discharges that seep into ground water, a concern to those with wells. Health effects vary from eye, respiratory, and skin irritation to risk of cancer depending on the VOC and length of exposure.

Pharmaceuticals: Increasingly, these compounds are appearing in trace amounts in drinking water and are currently under study by the EPA to assess the long-term side effects as well as what treatment options may remove them from water supplies.

Nitrates: Run-off and improper disposal of synthetic fertilizers dump nitrates into the water system. They pose immediate threats to newborns because they interfere with the oxygen-carrying capacity of the child's blood.

More: The EPA provides a comprehensive list of commonly found contaminants and evaluates water supplies for many major cities. Access this information and more at www.epa.gov/safewater. If you have specific questions related to water quality, you can also contact The Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 800.426.4791 for assistance.

Lori Ball gardens and writes at her home in Philadelphia.



Home Protection

You can make your drinking water purer with a home filtration system. Your options include "point of entry" filters that treat water as it enters your home and "point of use" filters that treat water right before you drink it.

Carbon Filter

Removes: Chlorine, disinfection byproducts, pesticides, radon. Reduces heavy metals including copper, lead and mercury. Be certain to check model as all carbon filters do not perform the same filtration benefits.

Style Options: Countertop pitchers, faucet filters and under-the-sink units.

Advantages: Generally low in cost and they retain minerals in water, which are beneficial to health.

Distillation

Removes: Bacteria and heavy metals such as cadmium, chromium, copper, lead and mercury, as well as arsenic, barium, fluoride, selenium and sodium.

Style Options: Countertop or whole house point-of-entry units; can be combined with a carbon filter.

Drawbacks: Without carbon filter addition, does not remove chlorine, chlorine byproducts or VOCs. The process removes all minerals, leaving behind acidic water.

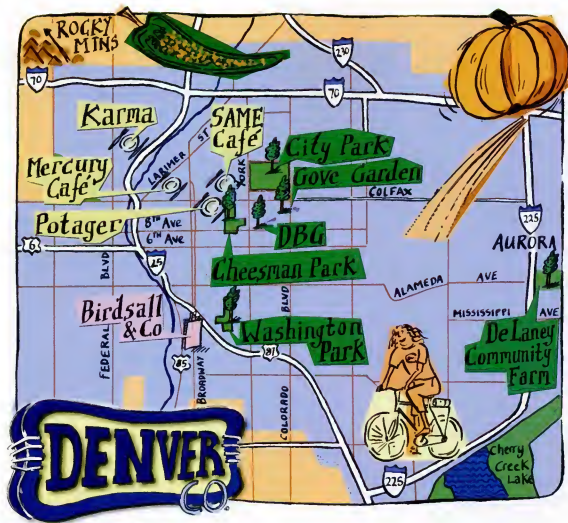
Reverse Osmosis

Removes: Most disease-causing bacteria, fluoride, nitrates, asbestos, metals including lead.

Style Options: Under the counter point-of-use

Drawbacks: Without carbon filter, RO filters do not remove VOCs or chlorine. Removes all minerals resulting in acidic water.

GREENHOUSE



GREAT GARDEN TOWN

How can you not love a city that has a yearly event called Jack-O-Launch? And yes, it involves pumpkins, homemade launching devices, and a date in October (the 13th)—your imagination can do the rest. But hey! Even organic gardeners have to cut loose once in a while. Denver really is a model city for sustainability in an urban setting, and this is the kickoff year for an initiative to plant a million trees by 2025.

- **Denver Botanic Gardens (DBG)** packs a lot into a small area. Gardeners know it as a living museum of native plants. DBG celebrates the fall season with a harvest party, corn maze, and pumpkin festival. 720-865-3500, botanicgardens.org
- **Denver Urban Gardens** oversees 65 community gardens. Attention OG readers: Gove Garden at 13th and Colorado has a compost demonstration site. Pedal on the Highline bike trail out

to DeLaney Community Farm in Aurora and the location for Jack-O-Launch. Visit dug.org for events.

● **Public parks** are where locals enjoy the sunshine. City Park boasts the Denver Zoo and the Museum of Nature & Science. Cheesman Park is for strolling, while Washington Park is for sports.

● **Farmers' markets** are listed in the Farm Fresh Directory on the Colorado Department of Agriculture Web site. Look for peaches in July and roasted chilies in the fall. 303-887-3276, ag.state.co.us/mkt

SAME Café. Pay what you can—the owners want everyone to have access to healthy food. 720-530-6853, soallmayeat.org

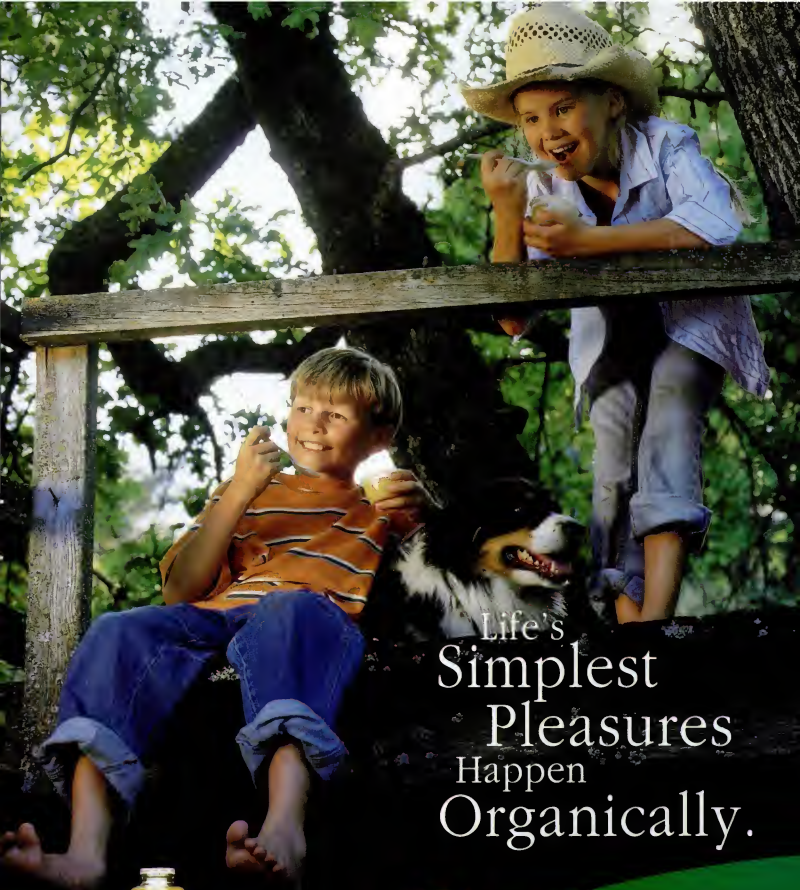
Mercury Café. Everything is from Colorado farms. Try Rebecca's parsnip cake. 303-294-9258, mercurycfe.com

Karma. The vegetarian food is enhanced by the flavors of India and Iran. 303-455-2533, karmasouljahs.com

Potager Restaurant and Wine Bar. The dinner-only menu changes with the season, and the garden is romantic. 303-832-5788, no Web site

● **Birdsall & Co.** Best place in the country for unusual pots and stone fountains. And the creative advice is free. 303-722-2535, birdsallgarden.com

For information on xeriscaping and tips on gardening in Denver from local experts, visit OrganicGardening.com.



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HOME

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OG WATCHDOG

Food or fuel: Using corn to replace just 15 percent of our gasoline would consume the entire U.S. crop.

BIOFUELS: What Every Citizen Needs to Know

By Greg and Pat Williams

Trail mix, cookies, French fries—sounds like snacks for a road trip, but in this case the road leads straight to the pigpen. Demand for ethanol, the fossil fuel substitute, has depleted supplies of corn and has led some farmers to feed junk food to their livestock. But is corn ethanol the solution? The answer is not as simple as we would hope. We asked biofuels experts to help explain the facts.

Corn as fuel. Currently, almost all of the fuel ethanol made in the United States comes from starch in corn grain. The Bush Administration has proposed that biofuels replace at least 15 percent of the gasoline we'll need by the year 2017. That's 35 billion gallons of fuel. If corn grain remains the primary source, the 10-year goal could easily consume the entire U.S. crop, leaving none left for food—for people or animals!

Even if we *could* produce enough corn to use as fuel, mass production of corn uses more herbicides, insecticides, and synthetic fertilizer, and causes more soil erosion, than production of any other U.S. crop. Corn has been the dominant source for ethanol because it is so inexpensive no other crop can compete with it. The positive side of this demand for corn: The price rise benefits farmers and forces the ethanol industry to research other, less expensive and more sustainable resources, says Mark Muller of the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy.

Corn residue. Archer Daniels Midland (ADM), the largest U.S. producer of fuel ethanol, and other leaders in the biofuels industry are currently exploring use of corn stover (residues of stalks and leaves normally left in fields to prevent erosion and add organic matter) as a major source of raw material for ethanol, adding to, rather than replacing, corn. The USDA is studying the amount of corn stover that farmers can remove and still maintain soil quality and keep erosion to a minimum. Initial results suggest that removing corn residues to the degree projected by some biofuel advocates may be detrimental to soil quality.

What about sugarcane? Brazil is on its way to energy independence, largely due to its success in producing ethanol from sugar cane. It is an attractive option, because while corn ethanol yields only about 1½ times as much energy as is required to produce it, sugar cane can yield eight times as much. However, suitable land in Florida will not supply our needs.



Hand Picked

Just for you

CONSERVATION COUNTS

You can immediately cut your own gasoline use by following these recommendations from OG and the U.S. Department of Energy:

- Drive sensibly (obey the speed limit and avoid rapid acceleration and braking).
- Replace your car's air filter when it's dirty—boosts gas mileage by 10 percent.
- Keep tires at the recommended air inflation: 3 percent improvement.
- Use the recommended grade of motor oil: 1 to 2 percent improvement.
- Buy a more fuel-efficient vehicle. Drive less: carpool; plan car use. Take the train.

Appealing alternatives. Of the various plant materials that can be used to make ethanol, cellulose (found in plant leaves and stems) is the most promising. Nonfood perennial "bioenergy crops," such as switchgrass or fast-growing trees, can be grown on subprime land using much less fertilizer, water, and pesticides than used for corn. Switchgrass potentially yields about four times the amount of energy needed to produce it. Research into the options, says Ralph Grossi of American Farmland Trust, "promises sustainable crops that will generate a good income for the farmer."

Certified biofuel. In spite of all the concerns and obstacles, we believe that the biofuels industry has at least the potential to lead U.S. agriculture toward sustainability, but only if consumers demand that it do so. Several European organizations have recently called for mandatory environmental certification programs for biofuels, yet hardly anyone in the United States is advocating (or even mentioning) it. We believe that trying to boost national energy security without giving consumers access to the information they need to avoid compromising national soil (and water and air) security is unacceptable.

Are biofuels organic? Using bioenergy crops as ethanol sources would likely result in less soil erosion. But changing to these crops would not rule out the use of fertilizers (although at lower rates than for corn) and synthetic herbicides.

Greg and Pat Williams publish the gardening newsletter *Hortideas* (users.mikrotec.com/~gwll) from their farm near Gravel Switch, Kentucky.

W Biofuels are an important part of the 2007 Farm Bill. You'll find information and links to reliable sources at OrganicGardening.com.

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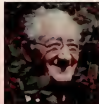
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show must go on

Don't call a time-out during the dog days of summer: Your garden can be as colorful & luxuriant now as it was in June.

By **Therese Ciesinski** Photographs by **Rob Cardillo**

Every flower gardener has the same goal: a continuous display of vivid color and appealing textures from spring through fall. Sounds simple, right? But in those tricky weeks between the end of the daylilies and the beginning of the chrysanthemums, how can you keep your show as captivating as it was in spring? We visited the garden of a renowned expert on this topic, Nancy Ondra, and captured her imaginative ideas for late summer in the photographs you see on these pages. Author of the books *Foliage* and the forthcoming *Fallscaping* (both from Storey Publishing), Ondra shared with us her principles for late summer color. We also asked experts from around the country for suggestions suitable to your climate.

Five Ways to Keep the Color Coming

1. Leave it to leaves: Foliage rules.

Rely on perennials, annuals, and shrubs with colorful or interesting foliage as the backbone of your late summer garden. Go beyond just choosing different colors; aim for a mix of leaf shapes, sizes, and textures, too.

For color: sweet potato vine, coleus, coral bells, Japanese blood grass, smoketree.

For shape: ornamental grasses, ferns, euphorbia, iris, castor bean, sedum.

For size: hosta, elephant's ear, sea kale, thyme, oregano, dianthus.

For texture: lamb's ears, agave, junipers, cacti, yarrows, sedges.

2. Use a couple of "go-to" plants to fill the gaps in your borders.

After those spring and early summer plants disappear postbloom, fill the spaces with the brightest, longest-flowering annuals you can find. Two especially appealing choices:

- 'Tip Top Mahogany' nasturtium (*Tropaeolum majus*). Deep red flowers held well above lively yellow-green foliage.
- 'Profusion Orange' zinnia. A neat, mounding habit and rich orange color.

3. Plant vegetables. Yes, vegetables.

It's easy to forget how beautiful and worthy of a place in your borders vegetables can be, especially if you have a small yard. And hey, if you don't like a planting combination, you can always eat it. Try these for starters:

- **'Black Pearl' pepper.** Fantastic black foliage and round, black-then-red fruits.
- **'Merlot' lettuce.** Deep maroon wavy leaves, slow to bolt, and tasty too!
- **Parsley.** Ondra pops it into both sunny and shady spots. "The rich green looks great with any other foliage or flower color," she says, "and the curly leaves add an interesting texture."

4. Think small (and medium and large).

Plants come in all sizes, so staggering small, midsize, and large plants in your borders creates the color flowing. These three provide multiseason interest:

- **'Angelina' sedum** (*Sedum rupestre*). A low grower that forms carpets of short, needle-like leaves that get about 4 inches tall, with starry yellow flowers. In full sun, the leaves are a bright, clear yellow in summer, turning orange in colder months. 'Angelina' also handles partial shade. "It seems to be able to grow just about anywhere, soilwise: It's as happy along my gravel driveway as it is in my winter-wet borders," Ondra says. It's hardy in USDA Plant Hardiness Zones 3 to 9.

- **Arkansas bluestar** (*Amsonia hubrichtii*). This bulletproof perennial grows in feathery-looking 3- to 4-foot-tall clumps of green leaves that turn gold in autumn. Clusters of pale blue flowers appear in early summer. "It's very adaptable: I have it in both dry and damp areas, and in full sun and partial shade," Ondra reports. "I've never noticed either pests or diseases, and the plants don't seem to need division." Zones 5 to 9.

- **Switchgrass** (*Panicum virgatum*). Sturdy and fuss-free, this tall grass always looks great, especially in late summer, with its airy flower plumes. Cut it to a few inches above the ground in late winter to early spring, and that's it for maintenance. Switchgrass needs sun; it sprawls in too

much shade. It accepts anything from dry to soggy soil. As for specific varieties, Ondra recommends 'Shenandoah', which has maroon-tipped green leaves and reaches 4 to 5 feet tall; 'Northwind', with olive green leaves that form tight 6-foot-tall clumps; and 'Cloud Nine', with bluish green foliage in vase-shaped clumps about 8 feet tall. Zones 4 to 9.

5. Do the combo mambo.

Amp up the color volume with one (or both) of these plant combinations. One is vibrant, one subdued. While they really shine in late summer and early fall, both provide plenty of spring and summer interest, too.

- **Sunshine Blue caryopteris** (*Caryopteris incana* 'Jason'), underplanted with **'Wood's Purple' asters** and **'Profusion Orange' zinnias**. This grouping brings bold, in-your-face color to a tired border. The caryopteris, a shrub, has bright yellow foliage and blue fall flowers. This combo looks best in full sun but tolerates some morning shade.
- **Arkansas bluestar** paired with **'Autumn Fire' sedum** and backed by **'Karl Foerster' feather reed grass** (*Calamagrostis X acutiflora*). This quieter combination uses leaf textures and plant forms, as well as color, for effect. Starting with early summer color from the bluestar's blue flowers, the plummy pinkish grass then flowers in midsummer, and finally the sedum's pink to red

flower display pairs with the bluestar's yellow foliage in fall. Give this combo full sun.

Tender, Loving Care

Nancy Ondra's garden is as care-free as she can make it. "Most of my annuals and perennials are in one area, so it's easier to manage the planting in spring and the digging-up of tender perennials and bulbs in fall." Cleanup waits until spring so wildlife can use the garden for winter food and shelter.

Ondra's philosophy: "Gardening should be fun and relaxing, not a source of stress. Enrich the soil before planting, choose hardy, time-tested perennials, and let them perform without supplemental watering, fertilizing, spraying, or protection. Yes, some will die, but don't take it as a personal failure; instead, consider it an opportunity to try something new!"





The Organic Edge

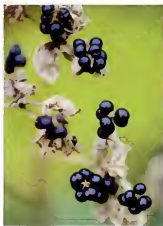
Less watering. Shorter days, more frequent rain, and cooler temperatures in fall mean plants need less irrigation from you.

Pests are gone. By this time, most pest insects have done their dirty work for the season.

Food and shelter for wildlife. Many late season plants, including zinnias, parsley, caryopteris, and sedum, provide food and nectar for insects, while ornamental grasses shelter insects and other ground-dwelling creatures.



Texturize me: Pink muhly and Arkansas bluestar spill on a path (opposite). Think shapes and textures, as in clusters of Joe Pye weed (above); more bluestar, with bistort (above right); and versatile parsley (far right, bottom). Leaves and berries (right and below) add detail.

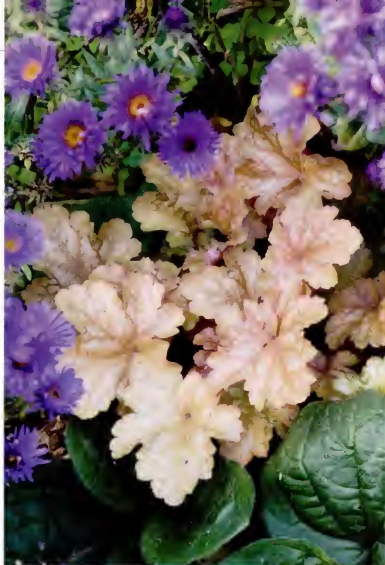


NEWBIE HINT

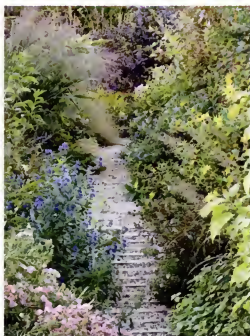
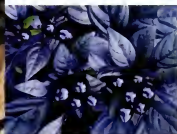
If you're unaccustomed to using foliage plants, start with annuals and tender perennials such as sweet potato vine, coleus, and elephant's ear. They're easy to grow and available in lots of colors, and if you don't like the way they look with your established plantings, Jack Frost will get rid of them for you.

MASTER'S TIP

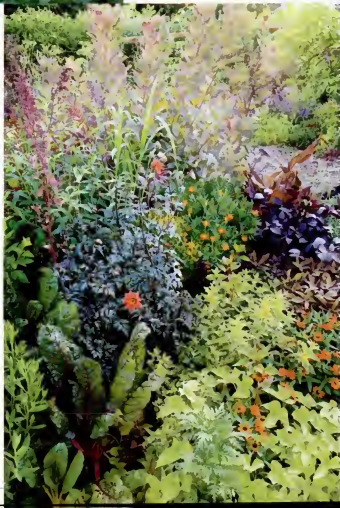
Plan for the changing colors of perennial foliage and flower buds. Just as trees and shrubs change throughout the season, perennials, especially fall-blooming ones, offer different perspectives of color as they grow and mature through the spring and summer. 'Autumn Joy' sedum is the classic example of a plant whose foliage and developing flower heads are decorative throughout its development.



Worth waiting for (clockwise from left): The apricot leaves of 'Dolce Peach Melba' coral bells intensify the petals of 'Woods Purple' asters. 'Black Pearl' pepper's fruits eventually turn red. Burgundy 'Hopi Red Dye' amaranth adds height and movement to the garden.



The late show: A purple ninebark's dark foliage (above) visually anchors a full, frothy flowerbed. If you don't like the way chard (right) looks in your borders, you can eat it.





The late and the great: Even the faded seedheads of *Celosia spicata* (above) are interesting. These plants (right) will remain standing even after frost to provide food and shelter for wildlife.



Regional Picks

We also asked expert gardeners around the country for their favorite late-season plants and planting combinations.

Northeast: Susan Keating is the owner of Sweet Pea Gardens in Surry, Maine.

Low grower: sedum. **Midsized:** dahlias. **Tall:** a hydrangea border hedge.

Gap fillers: Fast-growers: nasturtiums, alyssum, or violas.

Plant combinations: dahlias, sedum (pinkish maroon stage by then), and hydrangea (green stage by then). Also, white or lime green flowering tobacco (*Nicotiana glauca*), with azure blue Chinese forget-me-nots.

Midwest: Shirley Remes writes the gardening column

'Planting Partners' with her husband, Joe, for the *Chicago Sun-Times*.

Low grower: 'Ice Dance' variegated sedge (*Carex morrowii*).

Midsized: 'Longwood Blue' or 'Dark Knight' caryopteris. **Tall:** 'Summer Sun' heliopsis, because it just keeps blooming from midsummer on.

Gap fillers: 'Chocolate' eupatorium has magenta foliage and white flowers like soft cottony buttons.

Plant combinations: For pots, golden creeping Jenny (*Lysimachia nummularia* 'Aurea') underneath any coleus with yellow in it. In the garden, the complementary pinks of 'Alma Potschke' aster and *Sedum alboroseum* 'Mediovariegatum'.

Southwest: Susan Finlayson, Mandy Self, and Sharen Hauri are gardeners at the Wasatch Community Gardens in Salt Lake City.

Low grower: Fire chalice (*Zauschneria*), a southwestern native with orange-red trumpet-shaped flowers that is also a hummingbird magnet. **Midsized:** Russian sage (*Perovskia*), a drought-tolerant perennial; blooms with blue flowers from midsummer to frost.

Tall: Seven son flower (*Heptacodium*), a shrub that blooms from late summer into fall. Flowers start pale pink and mature to white.

Gap fillers: Annuals such as Brazilian verbena and larkspur.

Plant combination: Variegated iris and catmint.

Southeast: Hank Bruno, director of horticulture at Callaway Gardens in Pine Mountain, Georgia.

Low grower: Perennial chrysanthemums, such as 'Sheffield' and *C. pacificum* (a.k.a. *Ajania pacifica*). **Midsized:** Dusty zenobia (*Zenobia pulverulenta*) and *Fothergilla gardenii* both have excellent fall color in addition to a spring floral display. **Tall:** The candelabra bush (*Senna alata*, a.k.a. *Cassia alata*), native hibiscus (*H. coccineus*), and southern rose mallow (*H. moscheutos*) all grow 5 to 6 feet tall.

Gap fillers: Ornamental grasses provide trouble-free texture. *Pennisetum setaceum* 'Rubrum', an annual burgundy grass, offers visual impact with the added benefit of drought tolerance.

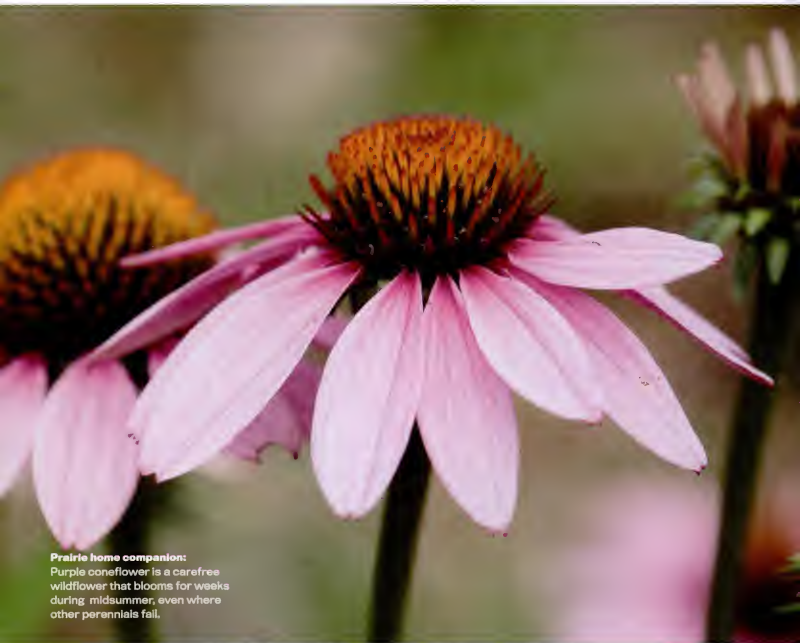
Plant combination: 'Santa Barbara' dwarf Mexican bush sage (*Salvia leucantha*) and dusty miller (*Senecio cineraria*). 🍷

Visit OrganicGardening.com for our list of autumn garden-to-do's (and don'ts), more late summer and fall planting combinations, and what to do now for a lush, healthy lawn next spring.

PURPLE PASSION

A NATIVE WILDFLOWER GETS A MAKEOVER AND IS TRANSFORMED
INTO A STAR ATTRACTION FOR YOUR FLOWERBEDS.

By **Sally Roth** Photographs by **Rob Cardillo**



Prairie home companion:

Purple coneflower is a carefree wildflower that blooms for weeks during midsummer, even where other perennials fail.

Like the hippie girl at a white-glove cotillion, purple coneflower is a prairie wildflower whose relaxed, windswept beauty has charmed even the most proper of gardeners. It is particularly welcome in organic flowerbeds because it is the most reliable, durable, and versatile perennial you can plant, asking little of you while giving you so much pleasure from the first bloom in summer to the last seed picked off by goldfinches in fall.

You'd think such a garden treasure could not be improved, but in recent years plant breeders have developed new colors, sizes, and flower shapes for you to enjoy. Be they the tried and true prairie original or a new and improved introduction, coneflowers fill your landscape with natural beauty and attract wildlife to your yard. The only question is, which is the best one for you?

To get the answer, I talked to coneflower aficionados and organic flower gardeners across the country.

The Champion

Purple coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*) has been quietly blooming away on American prairies for centuries—since long before Europeans settled this country. But it wasn't until native plants began getting attention in the 1970s that its garden-worthy qualities were discovered:

- Prolific rosy-purple daisies begin with a bang in midsummer, then continue showing off until frost.
- The midsize (3 to 4 feet tall) plant is easy to blend into a garden of any size: It's not too big or small, not too weedy, and not too pushy.
- The simple blooms are perfect partners for other easy summer bloomers, from daylilies to 'Wave' petunias.
- The burnished orange cones mellow to brown in winter; they're attractive when capped with snow.

Purple coneflower was "the first prairie plant to be elevated from wildflower to the status of 'perennial,'" says Neil Diboll, president of Prairie Nursery in Westfield, Wisconsin, "because it has everything you want in a great garden plant."

Why grow it: Purple coneflower is a great confidence-builder for any gardener—it's

Purple coneflower
is a great confidence-
builder for any gardener—
it's simple to grow,
laughs at drought,
& blooms forever."

simple to grow, laughs at drought and clay soil, and blooms for weeks on end in late summer. It is exceptionally easy to grow from seed or from plants. It even sows its own progeny, dropping seeds to expand your crop of coneflowers.

The Contender

'Orange Meadowbrite' is the hybrid that kicked off the coneflower rebellion. Its deep orange petals with a maroon cone were an instant hit with gardeners, even though the plants carried a price tag "about three times more expensive than other echinaceas," recalls nursery manager Dan Clost of Trenton, Ontario.

The color is striking, but in some gardens, the plant (and its yellow-orange cousin, 'Mango Meadowbrite') doesn't seem to be as robust or cold-hardy as the standard purple variety. Nan Sterman, OG test gardener in Encinitas, California, grows purple coneflower with no problem, but says, "I've tried growing the 'Meadowbrites' several times—with no luck. The plants just poop out."

"'Orange Meadowbrite' did not return after year three," even in well-amended soil, reports Jo Ellen Meyers Sharp, a gardener, writer, and photographer in Indianapolis. On the other hand, Dan Clost notes that the plants have "settled in nicely" at his garden in Ontario.

Why grow them: The 'Meadowbrite' varieties are so new on the scene that they haven't yet been widely grown. If you are a more adventurous gardener or just want something different, the warm colors and spicy sweet fragrance of these newcomers are worth taking a chance on.

The Upstarts

Even newer on the scene is the Big Sky Series, a collection of varieties developed by Itsaul Plants ("It's all plants") Nursery in Atlanta. The Big Sky varieties come in very appealing colors, ranging from soft yellow 'Sunrise' to deep coral-orange 'Sundown' to glorious red-coral 'Twilight'. The flowers have

NEWBIE HINT Each coneflower blossom lasts for weeks, but flowers fade as they age. For best color, and to encourage more buds, snip off faded blossoms, cutting the stem just above a leafy junction. In late summer, stop snipping and let flowers mature to attract birds, drop seeds for new plants, and catch the winter snow to come.



MASTER'S TIP Fine-textured or low-growing neighbors boost the impact of your bold coneflowers. Ground-covering *Diascia*, *Calibrachoa* Million Bells Series, or verbena are tender perennials that grow so fast you can plant them as annuals; they'll bloom until frost. For a softening touch, try ornamental grasses, especially blue fescue (*Festuca*), fountain grass (*Pennisetum*), or brown sedge (*Carex*).

The Organic Edge

Why grow echinacea in an organic garden?

Native plant: It's native to about half the United States, from Connecticut to Florida, and from Wisconsin to Colorado and Texas.

Wildlife: It provides food for wildlife, attracting big, beautiful swallowtails, monarchs, and other butterflies. Seed-eating goldfinches are big fans, too.

Carefree: It grows well in poor soil and it needs no pest-control treatments, fertilizing, or even watering once it is established.

Herbal healing: Both the aboveground parts and the roots of echinacea are used fresh or dried to make teas, juices, and extracts that herbalists prescribe to treat colds, flus, and infections. The National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine reports that studies show that echinacea may be beneficial in treating upper respiratory infections.

wide petals and striking contrasting centers, and the plants are vigorous. Best of all, these hybrids share the original purple coneflower's habit and dependability.

"They have performed well in our trial gardens, which feature heavy clay soil and humid summer heat," says John Friel of Yoder Brothers, a wholesale nursery in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. "In the ground, especially massed, they look terrific."

The colors of the Big Sky Series combine well with other perennials and are especially effective at pepping up plants with red or dark-toned foliage. "I have 'Sunrise' and 'Twilight' in my garden," says author and self-described "plant geek" Betty Earl of Naperville, Illinois. "They are sturdy plants, with long-lasting blooms, and attractive colors that incorporate well into the landscape."

Why grow them: Varieties in the Big Sky Series are vegetatively propagated (that is, not from seed), so plants at the nursery may be single-stemmed and look spindly and less promising than the familiar purple coneflower, which is often grown two or three plants to a pot. But once the Big Sky hybrids are in your garden, they'll quickly fill out. Cut lanky plants back by about a third to encourage more branching—which leads to

more of those fantastic flowers.

Like all coneflowers, these fabulous choices make great companions for yarrow (*Achillea*), daylilies (*Hemerocallis*), baby's breath (*Gypsophila*), and just about any other summer flower.

New Look for Old Faithful

Even the original purple coneflower has been jazzed up. These improved varieties include interesting oddballs, offbeat colors, and sizes to fit any garden. Some standouts:

- **'Double Decker'** ('Doppelganger'), which produces love-'em-or-hate-'em double-decker flowers, although many blooms are of the ordinary form.
- **'Fancy Frills'**, a double-petaled variety.
- **'Kim's Knee High'**, smaller than most at 2 feet, or **'Little Giant'**, only about 1½ feet tall.
- **'Ruby Giant'**, **'Magnus'**, and **'Vintage Wine'**, which offer intensified hues of rosy purple.



Conehead convention: Coneflowers sow their own seeds, increasing each season. Leave the cone-shaped seedheads standing until spring to encourage self-sowing and to feed birds. 'Sundown' (right) and 'Sunrise' (below right) thrive in clay soil and high humidity; 'White Swan' (below) looks cool next to red hot poker plants (*Kniphofia*).



- 'Pink Double Delight', with a frilly center of small, curly petals.
- Blush pink 'Hope', a "Plant for the Cure," whose sales help support the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation.
- Cool, white 'Fragrant Angel', a spectacular and elegant option. Or try the older 'White Swan'.
- A pair of unusual greenish varieties, 'Green Envy' and the green-centered 'Coconut Lime'.

Why grow them: Express your own sense of style by experimenting with these vigorous varieties. Many garden centers stock coneflowers in bud and bloom so you can see which you like best. If you're picking a plant in person, choose the biggest and most robust. Look for multiple strong stems, healthy green leaves (and plenty of them), and a generous number of flower buds. ♥

Sally Roth, author of the forthcoming *The Backyard Bird Lover's Field Guide* and other books about gardening and nature, has been a coneflower fan since she first fell in love with *E. purpurea* in a Midwest prairie 30 years ago.

W W W Learn the five steps to better flowers, as well as more ways to combine coneflowers with the other plants in your garden, at OrganicGardening.com.

SOURCES

Forestfarm, 541-846-7269, forestfarm.com

Plant Delights Nursery, 919-772-4794, plantdelights.com

Prairie Nursery, 800-476-9453, prairienursery.com

White Flower Farm, 800-503-9624, whiteflowerfarm.com

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Have a moonlight garden: 'Fragrant Angel', 'Sunrise', 'White Swan'



your second harvest

START NOW, AND YOU CAN DOUBLE YOUR
YIELD THIS YEAR AND ENJOY HOMEGROWN
FLAVOR INTO FALL AND WINTER.

By **Ron Clancy**

Photographs by **Chuck Russell**

Your vegetable garden is most likely at its peak of production right about now, with basketloads of summer favorites ripening every day. In just a few short weeks, though, the season for tomatoes, cucumbers, and other warm-weather crops ends. Good news: You don't have to wait until next spring to harvest more fresh vegetables from your garden. This week, you can plant a variety of crops that thrive in the cool temperatures of fall and some that even tolerate winter temperatures in the North.

There are many benefits to enjoy when you extend your growing season past summer. Most of the common, warm-weather pests and diseases either slow down or disappear completely when the weather turns cooler, making growing organically even easier. Fall and winter gardening is also good for your soil. Many organic gardeners are familiar with the cover crops that protect and build the soil. Fall and winter vegetables offer the same level of protection and, with careful management, do not deplete your soil. Best of all, crops such as carrots and kale taste better after they have endured some cold weather. If you've never gardened in fall before or even if you're an old hand at it, this guide is full of hints and tricks that make it easy and satisfying.

How Cold?

If you've gardened only in the summer, your first thought might be that your area is too cold even to consider fall and winter production. It doesn't get much colder than Maine, where grower Robin Follette harvests kale, cabbage, chard, arugula, endive, spinach, mâche, carrots, turnips, rutabagas, and broccoli well into November with little or no protection. These crops are able to withstand a fair amount of cold and frost.

"Since learning to grow two months longer than usual for this area, I've stopped canning and freezing so many vegetables. We're eating fresh instead," Follette says, adding, "I pull carrots, beets, and turnips and dig potatoes until just before the ground freezes. I start pulling carrots when they're small but enjoy late carrots more because they're sweeter after the ground gets cold."

Frost in mid-September does not deter Ann Caffey, an OG test gardener, from growing vegetables in her Zone 4 garden tucked into the foothills of the Rockies in southern Colorado. Her secret for growing success in this high desert environment is what she calls the "waffle design." In September, she plants broccoli, chard, cabbage, arugula, and other cold-weather crops in sunken areas that resemble a waffle, creating a protected microclimate that is also enhanced by fencing. Because deep watering





MASTER'S TIP

If you grow heading radicchio (such as 'Palla Rossa'), try leaving the root and stump in place over the winter. Often it will survive to send up small, perfect heads for you to enjoy in the early spring.

NEWBIE HINT

If you don't get a lot of snow where you garden, protect leaf crops such as lettuce and other salad greens with a floating row cover, which provides some frost insulation and keeps the leaves from getting too muddy from winter rains.

is better than frequent shallow applications, Caffey practices flood irrigation, watering up to 2 inches twice a week and using layers of straw to hold in moisture. Come October, she stops watering, and she keeps on harvesting right through the snow.

Three-Season Growing

If you're fortunate enough to live in USDA Plant Hardiness Zones 6 through 9, you can often extend your harvest through the winter and into spring. In Charlotte, North Carolina, the climate is mild enough for gardeners to brag that they have three growing seasons for vegetables. OG test gardener Don Boekelheide, in Zone 8, ushers transplants from late summer into fall by shielding them from the sun with floating row covers, "allowing them to grow to sweet maturity in the chilly months." Another protective cover he favors is Tufbell, which minimizes frost damage on lettuce and greens. Boekelheide believes in thinking ecologically—that is, making use of season-extending microclimates. A south-facing wall at his community garden holds the heat so well the gardeners harvest greens all winter.

When to Plant

Timing is the most important factor for success in fall gardening. Plants need to reach a good size before daylight diminishes to the point where they stop growing rapidly. While the days are becoming shorter in late summer, the soil holds more warmth than in spring, encouraging faster growth. By October, plants

are not growing much anymore, particularly in the far North, where the days are very short. This means starting transplants from seed about the end of July.

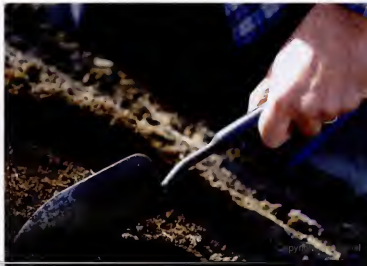
If you have a local nursery that serves serious gardeners, you may find seeds and even transplants for sale in August and into September. This is the easiest way to start your fall garden. But if you don't have a nursery you can rely on, plan ahead by stocking up on the seeds you'll need when you buy your spring supply. Choice of varieties is important. No matter where you live, frost- or cold-hardy varieties are your best picks for the chilly temperatures of fall and winter (see "Fall Favorites," opposite).

Where to Plant

Where do you find room to plant seeds when your vegetable beds are in full midsummer production? First, look where early-season vegetables are winding down. Peas are a perfect example, or perhaps your early lettuce crop. If that's not an option, try establishing a small nursery bed just for starting transplants, which can be as small as a square foot or two. Or, you can raise seedlings in flats on your deck or any other level surface until they are ready to set into the garden.

Sowing seeds in midsummer is different from spring growing. To succeed where summers are hot and dry, sow your seeds in a cooler, shadier spot until they have sprouted and are ready to thin. At this point, the days are shorter and you can move them to

And sow to bed: Setting up a nursery bed in a cool corner of the garden makes good use of a small area. Enrich soil with peat and compost, then sow seeds, keeping soil evenly moist. At 4 inches, this lettuce seedling is ready to be transplanted into a space left empty after a September harvest. A few warm weeks will establish transplants for winter growing.



Soil as storage: Tunnels (left) provide protection from rain and snow. Create them by bending wire or hangers into hoops, then covering with clear polyfilm available at home stores. Keep ends open to prevent heat damage. Carrots (right) can be stored in the ground along with other root crops. A 6- to 8-inch layer of straw protects the roots from freezing temperatures.

a more open location. Remember, seedlings must be kept consistently moist to survive, especially in hot weather. Avoid spots with poor drainage, however; plants drown in spots that stay soggy all winter.

What to Grow

Cool cole crops. Kale (really delicious after it's exposed to frost) is a dependable crop anywhere. Many varieties are reliably hardy down to zero or even below with a good snow cover. Collards are equally hardy. In milder areas (Zones 7 and 8), broccoli lasts through winter with the added bonus of no cabbage-worms. It comes back to life as soon as the days start getting longer. Try one of the sprouting broccolis, which are bred to be started in the fall for early spring production.

Tough greens. Endive, escarole, radicchio, spinach, and many Asian greens stand up well to cold. These include a whole range of mustards, mizuna, and shungiku (edible chrysanthemum greens). Chard often survives winter freezes well. Lettuce and parsley take quite a bit of frost and, when covered with snow, often last to spring. Spinach planted in fall produces some tender leaves before winter shuts it down. Mulch it well, and it starts growing again when temperatures warm up in spring.

Deep roots. Leeks, carrots, parsnips, beets, and other root crops are protected from the cold by the soil they are growing in. You can sow a second crop of most of these in midsummer or leave some of your spring-



Fall Favorites

Vegetable	Varieties	Start from Seed
Beet	'Winterkeeper' ('Lutz Greenleaf')	Mid-July through mid-August
Broccoli	'Purple Sprouting'	July
Chard	'Fordhook Giant'	May through July
Collard	'Champion'	Spring through mid-August
Endive	'Neos'	Mid-July through late August
Kale	'Lacinato', 'Siberian', 'Winterbor'	Mid-July through mid-August
Leek	'Giant Musselburgh'	Spring, harvest into winter
Lettuce	'Winter Density'	August through mid-September
Mizuna	'Kyoto'	August through mid-September
Spinach	'Olympia', 'Teton'	August through mid-September

SOURCES Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds, 417-924-8917, rareseeds.com Johnny's Selected Seeds, 877-564-6697, johnnysseeds.com Southern Exposure Seed Exchange, 540-894-9480, southernexposure.com Territorial Seed Company, 800-626-0866; territorial-seed.com





Bounty fall: Leek seedlings (above) and chard (below) are both the right size to be transplanted into the fall garden. Sown in late July, these seedlings will be ready to plant out in early September. Harvest leeks when small (finger-size) for sweeter taste. Chard will yield tasty leaves as long as the outside leaves are harvested as the center continues growing.



Third Harvest: Next Spring

You can extend your fall and winter garden well into spring. Members of the cabbage family (kale, collards) start to send up flower shoots as the days lengthen. These, when picked young, make a wonderful spring vegetable, similar to very tender broccoli. Later, add the yellow flowers to salads. The stumps of cabbage heads harvested in the fall often survive the winter and in the spring put out tiny cabbages similar to Brussels sprouts.

grown crop in place, using the garden as a storeroom and harvesting through the winter. Covering the plants with about 8 inches of straw or other loose mulch when hard freezes arrive protects the roots and makes them easier to dig up when the ground is solid.

Growing Guide

Crops for fall and winter production have the same needs as spring and summer vegetables: good drainage and fertile organic soil. But because the essential microbes in your soil are less active when the earth is cold, add compost or other organic material as well as organic fertilizer whenever you plant vegetables for a second harvest. It is especially important to renew soil that has just produced another crop. And practice patience. Shorter days and cooler nights slow down growing, adding time to the maturing process.

The most dependable way to extend your season is to set up a tunnel made from plastic tubing bent over into hoops covered with a sheet of clear plastic. This offers more protection than floating row covers and is most useful for really cold-hardy greens such as kale, chard, or mustard greens. Don't seal it too tightly; the sun can fry your plants even in midwinter.

If you have no plastic tunnel set up and no snow cover, protect your plants from a hard freeze by throwing a tarp over the bed temporarily. This also works during occasional ice storms.

Keep a lookout for plants that have been heaved by freeze/thaw cycles and settle them back into the ground.

You already understand the satisfaction that comes from growing and eating your own vegetables. Double that thrill when you harvest even a few vegetables in the cold and dark of fall and winter. Now that's a gardening challenge worth taking on. 🍷

Ron Clancy was educated as a chemist, worked as a librarian, and thrives as an urban farmer on a small city lot in Vancouver, British Columbia. He is an active Master Gardener.



Plant a postharvest cover crop to build your soil for next spring. See "Cover Your Asset" on page 20, and visit OrganicGardening.com for details.

The Organic Edge

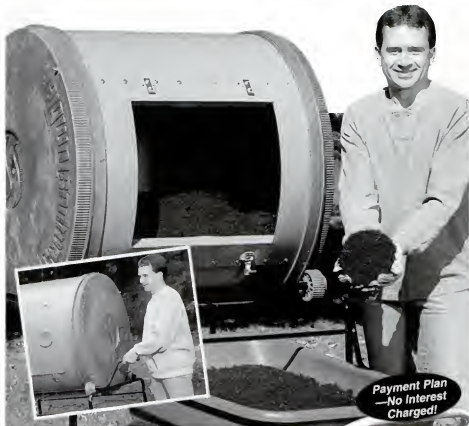
- Pests are gone when the weather turns cooler, so you don't need pesticides of any kind.
- More home-grown meals = less energy needed to transport food.
- Winter crops protect soil from erosion in winter storms.



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GARDEN

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VIEW

Charming cottages and a garden bursting with fresh produce that guests can harvest for themselves make California's Mar Vista vacation retreat an inviting getaway spot for organic gardeners.

By **Willi Evans Galloway** Photographs by **Christa Neu**

Just past the village of Anchor Bay on a winding stretch of U.S. Route 1 in California, a little gravel drive turns inland. Twelve sunny yellow vacation cottages with pitched roofs and petite white porches are set back from the drive onto an expanse of cushy green grass dotted with wildflowers. Hens wander about searching for snails, and four impossibly soft bunnies make their home under the boughs of a pine tree. At the center of the property, a chalkboard sign hangs from the kitchen garden's gate, announcing that salad greens, herbs, and broccoli are ready for guests to harvest. Young apple, fig, pear, and lemon trees make up a small orchard, and two pygmy goats, Mr. Higgins and Pygmalion, greet visitors by the lodging office door.

Welcome to Mar Vista. Where room service means discovering a basket of freshly laid eggs on your doorstep and the closest thing to a snack from the minibar is sampling a handful of just-picked strawberries. The nightlife includes stargazing, roasting marshmallows over a fire, and listening as a chorus of frogs harmonize with the rumbling ocean. "Our theme is simplicity," explains Renata Dorn, who owns the vacation retreat with her husband, Tom. "Mar Vista has a spirit that is natural and unique, and we feel a sense of duty to respect and develop that."

Honor Natural Spaces

When the Dorns bought Mar Vista nearly nine years ago, a deal to bulldoze the 1930s- and '40s-era cottages and develop the rundown property into a lavish resort

had just fallen through. "We were never interested in that," says Renata, who managed luxury hotels for years. Instead, the Dorns made a conscious decision to create a sustainable retreat by preserving the resources at hand: simple cottages, expansive views of the Pacific, a private beach, and 9 acres of redwood forest, marshland, and meadows.

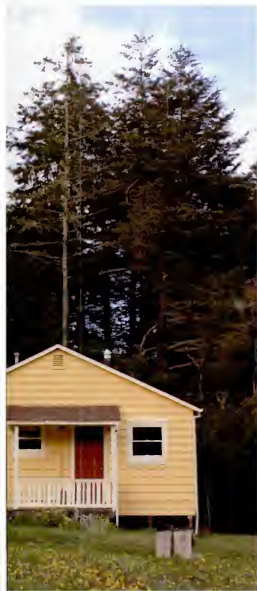
As the restoration process began, Renata focused on the cottages, while Tom, a lifelong city dweller who jokes he didn't know how to use a garden hose, took charge of the grounds. "Little by little, I started to get the sense that the special thing about this place was all the land and space," Tom says.

The couple wanted Mar Vista's outdoor spaces to reflect the clean, unfussy aesthetic of the cottages and the surrounding natural environment, so they based their landscape plan on the principles of permaculture—a design philosophy that relies on working with a site's natural systems and resources to establish an organic, productive, sustainable environment for people.

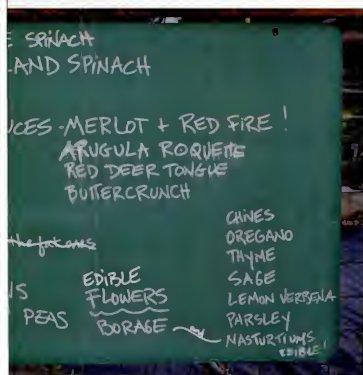
All about the Garden

Creating a typical, unimaginative, chemical-soaked hotel garden that was devoid of edible plants just didn't fit with the Dorns' values. "It would seem like a contradiction to offer a sweet little cottage and a garden full of chemicals," Renata says. So they focused on designing a garden that would distinguish Mar Vista from other lodging options on the coast. They planned an intensively planted





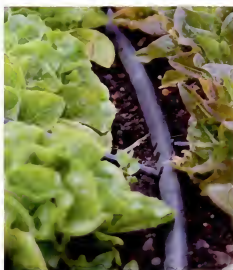
Tom Dorn, founder of the Newbie Farm, says, "We are fortunate that we could not act on all of our plans at once." Tom Dorn says, "Because we've had to be slow and thoughtful, we've made better decisions."



Newbie hint: Take one step at a time. "We are fortunate that we could not act on all of our plans at once," Tom Dorn says. "Because we've had to be slow and thoughtful, we've made better decisions."



Two 2000-year-old Greek myths tell us that the goddess Demeter, who is the goddess of grain, was once kidnapped by the god of the underworld, Hades. Demeter was so distressed that she stopped growing crops, and the world was in a state of famine. Zeus, who was the king of the gods, was forced to make Hades release Demeter. When Demeter returned to her duties, she was so angry that she punished Hades by making him the god of the underworld. This is why Hades is often depicted as a dark, gloomy figure.



Master's tip: Make earwigs old news. Roll up a damp piece of newspaper and place it in the garden at night. Earwigs, slugs, and snails will hide out in the roll, and in the morning you can throw them away...or feed them to the chickens.



"It would seem like a contradiction to offer a
weet little cottage and a garden full of chemicals."

organic kitchen garden for the guests to harvest from. "It was obvious to us to have a vegetable garden for guests when we have cottages with kitchens," Tom says. Rather than hiding the garden in a far-off corner, the couple chose to site it at the physical center of the property on a lovely patch of ground that looks west toward the ocean. The cottages, which are spread around the perimeter of the property, all have views of the garden, many from their kitchen windows. "The garden is the heart, and the cottages are like wagons centered around it," explains Renata, who stocks each cottage with harvest baskets, a set of cookware and utensils, and a compost pail to collect vegetable scraps for the compost piles and worm bin.

A short walk from the garden, the Dorns fenced in a large area and planted an orchard. Their flock of more than 30 chickens lives within the orchard, partly for protection from the local bobcat population and partly to protect the trees by devouring insects and weed seeds.

Gardening for Guests

"A lot of guests choose to come here because of the garden," Tom observes. "The garden is the clincher." And that's no surprise, considering that everything about the garden—how it was planned, what is growing in it, and how it is managed—reflects a conscious effort to make it as accessible to the guests as possible.

This is not a display garden, where everything is too precious. The rectangular, cinder-block raised beds are spaced a comfortable distance apart, making harvesting easy. A few weeds peek out of the mulched pathways, and familiar vegetables—lettuce, beets, carrots—grow in slightly crooked rows. Everything about

the kitchen garden feels homey, welcoming, and just right. "The whole idea that we're learning, that we're not experts or perfect, puts people at ease," Renata says.

Tom and Luis—Mar Vista's affable gardener—plant year-round so that all guests, regardless of the season they visit, have an opportunity to experience harvesting their own food. Arugula, chard, spinach, lettuce, herbs, and edible flowers form the backbone of the garden. "We choose varieties based on what does well in cool weather, what tastes good, and what guests like," says Tom, adding with a laugh, "turnips aren't very popular." Harvests of tried-and-true favorites, including tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, and corn, can be hit or miss in the cool maritime climate. So Tom experiments with different varieties, and he hopes that two new solar greenhouses will not only make those crops available more reliably but also expand the varieties he can grow.

Plans to install a rainwater harvesting system, keep honeybees, and expand the vegetable garden are all in the works. But in the meantime, the Dorns are happy to help their guests experience the pleasures of eating food right out of the ground. "Once guests try a salad they've harvested," Renata says, "they realize how easy the greens are to collect and how intense the flavors are, and they are right back out there for more."

Simple Soil Plan

Growing crops year-round demands that you pay special attention to the soil, Tom Dorn says. He created a soil-building regimen based on advice from experienced local organic gardeners. All of the beds get a dose of compost, and he custom-mixes soil amendments for different crops using organic, and often locally available, products.

Leafy crops

Blood meal or bat guano
Cottonseed
Fish meal

Fruit and flower crops

Bone meal
Bird or bat guano
Kelp

Root plants

Oyster shell
Sulphur

W To learn more about Mar Vista, visit
W OrganicGardening.com and Mar Vista's
W Web site, marvistamendocino.com.

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A NONGARDENER
HAS HAD ENOUGH

By David Caruso

OF OUR GOOD NATURE
AND GENEROSITY.

Illustrations by Linzie Hunter

I don't like to get my hands dirty. And yes, the only less desirable way to start a story in this magazine would be by saying, "Pesticides are misunderstood." But it's true:

While I admire gardeners, I have no desire to roll up my sleeves and join their ranks.

I was born this way. My mom still needles me over my reluctance to play in the dirt with trucks when I was a kid. And making mud pies? Gee, I'd love to, but I'm in the middle of this Hardy Boys mystery....

What I'm saying—and I think it takes guts to out myself in these venerable pages, where the deer fencing and the cantaloupe play, so to speak—is that my idea of a great harvest is finding a deli with baby corn. You may be an ace with a spade, but step back—I handle salad bar tongs like a ninja uses nunchakus!

I may yet become one of you; turns out it's in my blood. My dad didn't plant his first garden until he was in his 50s, and I have to hand it to him:



Working with soil on par with the lunar surface (to this day, every time I look at his garden, I expect to see Neil Armstrong hopping around with a flag), he consistently churns out great-tasting tomatoes and onions.

Gardeners seem to be a good-natured lot; I guess it's all that time in the fresh air and sunshine. So I hope you'll take this advice in the spirit it's intended: Stop growing so much stuff!

Every summer, it's the same story: My family and friends launch a full frontal assault with the extra bounty from their gardens. I don't mean to be ungrateful, but how many veggies can you eat, even if they are homegrown? It's like panhandling in reverse: Uh-oh, here comes Bill—quick, dive behind the hedge before he spots us and tries to give us more tomatoes!

(The lycopen in tomatoes is reputed to be good for the prostate. If this is true, Bill's walnut-size gland is showroom new. And judging by the immensity of his annual crop, he could prevent the entire male population of Boise from getting up at night to pec.)

By August, the conference room table at our office has been turned into a way station for homeless produce. Everybody's happy to dig in—for the first 700 or so zucchini. But you can feel the mood gradually shift, from excitement to satiety to mild nausea to "If she brings in one more bagful of those things, I swear I'll napalm her yard so nothing grows for three generations."

I'm contemplating dumping a pile of baked beans splat in the middle of the table one day. Then I'll smile, point at the oozing brown mass, and say, "They were on sale, three cans for a dollar, but I can't eat all that—so I'm *sharing!*"

The ultragenerosity of the backyard farmer knows no bounds. Consider this exchange when a coworker saw me having a sandwich at my desk:

"Whatcha eatin'?"

"Ham and cheese sandwich."

"Is that lettuce on it?"

"Yeah."

"What kind?"

"Iceberg."

"Iceberg?!" From the look on his face and the chill in his voice, you'd have thought he was in the crow's nest on the *Titanic*.

Fair warning: When someone jokes about his "lettuce of the week" club, he may not be joking. Now if you'll excuse me, I have to go shopping for a salad spinner. 🍅

David Caruso would like you to believe that "David Caruso" is the nom de plume of a highly respected essayist and gentleman farmer. In fact, "David Caruso" is the name of a heretofore undiscovered talent toiling in the Recycling Department of the word factory at the home office here in Emmaus, Pennsylvania.



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CLOSER LOOK

Pickles

A homemade pickle captures the taste of summer—sweet with a hint of tanginess—so you can savor it at any time of the year. You might think that making pickles takes hours in the kitchen or requires knowledge you need to learn from your grandmother or Aunt Sally, but visit OrganicGardening.com to see how simple and fun fermenting your homegrown produce can be.

"On a hot day in Virginia, I know nothing more comforting than a fine spiced pickle, brought up trout-like from the sparkling depths of the aromatic jar below the stairs of Aunt Sally's cellar."
—Thomas Jefferson



Pickle Particulars

- 4.2 pounds: Annual per capita consumption of pickles in the United States
- Michigan and North Carolina: America's leading pickle-producing states
- 10 paces: Distance you can hear the crunch of a well-made pickle
- Midgets or gherkins are picked from same plant that produces large cucumbers, *Cucumis sativus*. To get an especially spiny miniature, grow *C. anguria*.
- Elvis Presley liked deep-fried pickles.
- The phrase *in a pickle* was first introduced in Shakespeare's play *The Tempest*, with the quote, "How camest thou in this pickle?"

Unsure about "Kosher"?

It signifies that garlic flavor has been added to the dill recipe.



What Can You Pickle? Take Your Pick!

While Americans enjoy fermented cucumbers, we're also known to pickle beets, okra, cauliflower, watermelon rinds, and eggs. Piccalilli and chowchow are pickled vegetable relishes—popular condiments in the South and among the Pennsylvania Dutch. Icelandic communities bury shark meat and let it ferment to make harkarl. Koreans turn cabbage into kimchi. Germans pickle cabbage and make sauerkraut. Japanese pickle ginger to make gari, served with sushi.



Steeped in the Past

Américo Vespucci, our country's namesake and Columbus's ship-stocker, loaded barrels of pickles onto the *Niña*, *Pinta*, and *Santa Maria* to help prevent scurvy outbreaks. Because of their ability to keep without spoiling in brine for as long as two or three years, pickles were also invaluable to early settlers, who made them at the end of summer to eat during the lean winter months.



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